

My go-to things don't work anymore:
**Teacher perspectives on challenging behaviour
and the CPS approach**

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Abstract

Background: Many New Zealand teachers face challenging behaviours in their daily classroom interactions with children. Children who exhibit challenging behaviour often struggle to progress at school and frequently disrupt the learning of other students. Teachers are largely responsible for managing challenging behaviour at school and can sometimes feel unsupported, frustrated, and at a loss to know what to do to help children develop socially appropriate behaviours. One possible tool for navigating challenging behaviour is Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach (2014). This approach considers the problems and conflicts a child is experiencing with regards to meeting adults' expectations of a given situation. CPS aims to work proactively and collaboratively with the child to find solutions to those problems. The CPS approach is a relatively new framework in which to examine children's challenging behaviours and has not been examined extensively in schools. Therefore this research project seeks to explore the usefulness of this approach for classroom teachers.

Method: This project comprised of two phases. In Phase One, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences of 13 primary school teachers dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom. These interviews aimed to describe (a) strategies these teachers currently employ in response to challenging behaviour, and (b) teachers' beliefs and feelings concerning their interactions with children with challenging behaviours. In Phase Two, teachers were introduced to the CPS approach (Greene, 2014), and were encouraged to reflect on its viability as a tool to support children with challenging behaviours in school settings. A follow-up focus group session asked teachers to share their opinions on the

usefulness of the CPS approach for their respective classrooms. Data were analysed using thematic analysis methods.

Results: Overarching themes of control (the power to influence or direct behaviour) and allostasis (stability through change) emerged as teachers explained what they do (actions) and what they think (beliefs and feelings) about challenging behaviour. Teacher actions included proactive and reactive strategies, professional development experiences, supports to manage or prevent challenging behaviour, and communication. Teacher beliefs included rationales for particular actions, expectations for children's behaviour, and theorising about underlying causes or immediate triggers for challenging behaviour. Responses about how teachers felt about students' challenging behaviour included concerns about the impact on classroom safety and learning, as well as their feelings of success (or failure) as they responded to behaviour they perceived as challenging. Teachers stated that the CPS approach had helped them develop more profound understandings and stronger relationships with children; however, they also expressed the difficulty of having sufficient time to fully engage with children through the CPS approach. Aspects of student and teacher motivation are explored through the lenses of Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1974).

Conclusion: This research describes primary school teachers' perspectives on and lived experiences with students' challenging behaviour. With a sample of teachers, motivated to help children succeed both academically and socially at school, the project findings shed light on how dedicated teachers attempt to respond to challenging behaviours, as well as their beliefs about the origins of such behaviours. The results present teachers' perceived opportunities and limitations of CPS as a tool to aid with developing positive, solution-focussed relationships with children whose behaviour is interpreted as challenging.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Tables.....	ix
Abbreviations.....	x
Chapter One: Introduction.....	11
Research Aims and Questions.....	11
Background.....	12
Researcher’s Professional Background.....	15
Thesis Structure.....	16
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	18
New Zealand Historical Context.....	18
Cultural Responsiveness.....	20
Behaviour Support, Policies and Guidelines.....	22
Learning and Behaviour Management Theory.....	24
Motivation, Attribution and Self-determination.....	31
Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) Approach.....	35
Summary.....	39
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	40
Researcher as Participant.....	42
Method.....	43
Research Approval and Ethical Issues.....	43
Case Setting.....	44
Invitation to Participants.....	45

Data Collection	46
Phase One Data Collection	47
Phase Two Data Collection.....	48
Data Analysis and Reporting	49
Reliability and Validity	51
Summary	52
Chapter Four: Data Narratives	53
Teacher Perspectives of Challenging Behaviour	53
Allostasis and Control.....	54
Challenging Behaviour: Teachers' Actions and Thoughts	55
What Teachers Do: Actions	58
Reactive Strategies.....	60
Proactive Strategies.....	64
Searching For Help	70
What Teachers Think.....	75
Beliefs	76
Theories About Cause of Challenging Behaviour	83
Feelings.....	90
Stories	97
Why These Stories?	97
Story One.	99
Story Two.....	101
Story Three.....	104
CPS as a Useful Approach.....	106
Links to Phase One Themes.....	106
CPS Specific Themes.....	109

Time	109
New Perspectives	111
Next Steps	113
Summary	114
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion	116
Motivation.....	118
Expectations.....	124
Teacher Actions	125
Beliefs and Feelings	128
Learning and Socialisation.....	131
Limitations	133
Recommendations.....	134
Conclusion	137
References.....	139
Appendices.....	123
Appendix A – Board of Trustees consent letter.....	124
Appendix B – Ethics approval confirmation	125
Appendix C – Information for participants.....	126
Appendix D – Questions for 1:1 semi-structured interviews.....	129
Appendix E – Questions for focus group sessions.....	130
Appendix F – Booklet for participants.....	131
Appendix G – Definition of challenging behaviour	150

List of Figures

Figure 1. Behaviour cycle	57
Figure 2 Challenging behaviour response cycle	58

List of Tables

Table 1. Themes and subthemes	55
Table 2. Reactive strategies	60
Table 3. Proactive strategies	64
Table 4. Help.....	70
Table 5. Beliefs	76
Table 6. Theories about cause.....	83
Table 7. Feelings	91

Abbreviations

ALSUP	Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems
CPS	Collaborative and Proactive Solutions
CRT	Classroom Release Time
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
NZ	New Zealand
PB4L	Positive Behaviour for Learning
RTLb	Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour
RTM	Resource Teacher of Māori
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SWIS	Social Worker in Schools

Chapter One: Introduction

Children's behaviour at school has far-reaching implications for their academic achievement, relationships with peers and general socialisation. While it is a reasonable expectation that children develop the skills needed to manage their behaviour, the reality is that many children are still in the early stages of developing self-regulation. Children may not be intentionally challenging. They are experimenting with their coping strategies, testing boundaries and exploring what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour in different situations. Classroom teachers are primarily the people who shape and support children's behaviour at school (Macfarlane, 2007), and the cost on teachers' energy and emotions is often high. Many New Zealand teachers face challenging behaviours in their daily classroom interactions with children (Church & University of Canterbury Education Department Team, 2003; Ministry of Education, 2019b). Teachers sometimes feel frustrated, unsupported and can feel at a loss to know what to do to help children with challenging behaviour (NZEI, 2017). The stress challenging behaviour places on classroom teachers is substantial: it can result in teacher burnout and problems with teacher recruitment and retention (Clements, 2016; Collins, 2019; Jones, 2018; Walters, 2019).

Research Aims and Questions

Challenging behaviours have the potential to impact negatively on students, classrooms, and schools. Negative outcomes can be further exacerbated when teachers feel powerless in their ability to handle such behaviours effectively. This project was designed to understand this research problem in greater detail. Specifically, this research was conducted in two phases and had two main research

questions. The first question was: What are primary school teacher's perspectives of challenging behaviour at school? This phase aimed to explore and give voice to the experiences of a small group of primary school teachers from one school in Christchurch, New Zealand as they reflected on dealing with challenging behaviour. Their beliefs and feelings about challenging behaviour and the strategies they employ to manage children's behaviour in the classroom are described. During the second phase, teachers were introduced to the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) (Greene, 2014) approach and were asked the question: What are primary school teachers' perceptions and practical considerations of CPS as a useful approach to help teachers manage challenging behaviour in the classroom?

Background

Children who exhibit challenging behaviour often struggle to progress at school and frequently disrupt the learning of other students (Macfarlane, 2007). Some challenging behaviours are physically violent (e.g., harming others and property), other behaviours are unsafe for the child (e.g., running away or head banging). Alongside the more typically understood disruptive behaviours, such as swearing, calling out and refusing to follow instructions, other socially challenging behaviours that might impact on the emotional safety of others can include stealing, inappropriate touching, or threatening behaviours. Withdrawal behaviours such as social isolation and extreme shyness, or anxious behaviours such as rocking or hand flapping can also be challenging for teachers although these behaviours may not cause as much conflict as other behaviours. (Victoria State Government, 2018).

Various terms have been used to describe challenging behaviour, and it is, therefore, essential that research in this area begins with a clear definition. Examples within the literature include adjectives such as difficult, antisocial, challenging, bad,

unacceptable, disruptive, deviant, out-of-control, and defiant (Church & University of Canterbury Education Department Team, 2003; Greene, 2014; Macfarlane, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2019c; Rogers, 2015). The Royal College of Psychiatrists (2007) defines challenging behaviour as,

behaviour of such an intensity, frequency or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion (p.10).

Challenging behaviour at school can be defined as behaviour that significantly affects a child's learning, risks the child's safety or the safety of others, or interferes with positive relationships with other people (Ministry of Education, 2019a). Greene (2014) defines challenging behaviour as a child's inability to adaptively meet adults' expectations of a situation. In this research, the term *challenging* will be used to encapsulate behaviours that vary from schools' and teachers' accepted social norms for student behaviour. Challenging behaviour, therefore, may encompass the harmful, disruptive, antisocial nature of behaviour and the relational aspect that recognises other people are challenged by or have difficulty with the behaviour.

Teachers employ various strategies to help manage and understand children with challenging behaviour (Vaughn & Bos, 2012). Sometimes these strategies are effective in reducing or eliminating challenging behaviour, and positive development and growth in children's prosocial behaviour is facilitated. At other times, teachers experience frustration, stress, and a sense of failure because nothing they try seems to effect change. The relationship between child and teacher is key to the child's success at school (O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011). Positive relationships between teacher and child foster the development of critical social and behavioural skills (Baker, 2006).

Greene (2014, 2019a) designed the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach to help children with challenging behaviour. Greene's (2018) CPS approach considers the "problems" a child is experiencing in meeting adults' expectations of a given situation and asks the adults to work proactively and collaboratively with the child to find solutions to those problems. Greene (2014) contrasts two perspectives of children with challenging behaviour. He argues that if we believe "children do well when they want to" (Greene, 2014, p. 10) and they are not doing well, we are logically led to believe that they lack in motivation. This view focuses on the child *wanting* to do well. If, however, we believe that, "it is always better to do well than not do well, and children do well when they can," (Greene, 2014, p. 10) and they are not doing well, then we must recognise that they lack in some skills that enable them to do well. This distinction between motivation and lagging skill is a central aspect of Greene's approach.

There is limited research on the application of CPS in regular school settings (Greene & Winkler, 2019). This project seeks to share teacher's perspectives of challenging behaviour along with an assessment of the usefulness of the CPS approach in regular school classrooms in one New Zealand primary school.

Considering students' behaviour and teachers' perspectives of such behaviour may be best interpreted through self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2008). SDT highlights the universal needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness as crucial components of an individual's motivated behaviour. In school, teachers and children have these same three needs, although their expectations and experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness will be different. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008) seems to match closely with Greene's beliefs about the need to include the student in any solution-making process. He argues that much of the challenging behaviour children exhibit in classrooms is triggered by the child's lack of competence and

inability to meet the expectation. Greene suggests that the only effective way to address these concerns is through a collaborative process that acknowledges the child's autonomy and is rooted in positive relationships with the adults in the child's life, primarily the parents and the teacher (Greene, 2014). In New Zealand schools, children's experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is dependant on the understanding their teachers have about how to facilitate the development of these needs.

Researcher's Professional Background

As a Deputy Principal at a large urban full primary school in Christchurch, New Zealand, a significant part of my role is helping when classroom interactions are not going well for teachers and children. Some of the support that I offer includes meeting with children, teachers, parents, specialist support staff, teacher aides and other staff as required to help resolve issues and explore solutions. I have observed that teachers call for help when the behaviour challenges them beyond their resources to cope. While it may seem self-evident that teachers will only call for help when they are no longer able to manage situations themselves, a closer examination of the issues is warranted. What is sometimes lacking is an understanding of the situations that teachers find challenging, the resources, skills, experience and beliefs they bring to those situations, and the physical and emotional cost that managing children with challenging behaviour has on teachers.

My interest in this research project is to gain a more detailed understanding about the behaviours that teachers find challenging, the resources they currently employ to manage challenging behaviour, and their insights into the usefulness of the CPS approach after they have had an opportunity to try using the approach in their classrooms. My feelings of frustration when not knowing how to help children have

influenced my professional development choices over many years. A recent discussion with a colleague challenged me greatly and was a significant motivator behind my choice of this research topic. We were talking about ongoing challenging behaviour that she had been dealing with and this experienced, skilled and compassionate teacher said, with tears in her eyes, “My toolkit is empty. My go-to things don’t work anymore.” These experiences have shaped my lens as a researcher and fuelled my desire to find “better tools”. Hopefully, this research will give voice to those teachers who are feeling that their toolkits are empty and perhaps some hints as to a way ahead, or at least some things to think about.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is comprised of a further four chapters, as outlined below:

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to challenging behaviour at school. It includes sections on historical perspective, cultural responsiveness, Ministry of Education behaviour supports, policies and guidelines, learning and behaviour management theory, motivation, attribution and self-determination theory, and a summary of Greene’s (2014) CPS approach.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

Chapter 3 sets out the underlying theoretical perspective and rationale for the methodology of this qualitative case study. The data gathering method of interviews and focus group are explained and the process for thematic analysis described. A brief description is given of the case setting, and the approval process and ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter is divided into two parts and presents the findings from each phase of the research. Phase one includes a thematic analysis of 1:1 teacher interviews and journal reflections that describe teacher actions, beliefs and feelings related to managing challenging behaviour in their classrooms. The themes are illustrated with appropriate quotes and the inclusion of three complete stories that present a picture of the wider context from which the themes have been derived.

The second phase is an analysis of the focus group meeting that asked teachers for their perspective of using the CPS approach.

Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusion

This chapter contains a discussion of the key findings. Suggestions are given for teacher's professional development and recommendations given for schools wishing to better support teachers dealing with challenging behaviour. Strengths and limitations of the research are outlined along with suggestions for future research and an overall conclusion.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The conflict associated with challenging behaviour negatively affects the well-being of teachers through increased stress (Bermejo-Toro, Prieto-Ursúa, & Hernández, 2016) and also negatively affects the wellbeing and learning of children (Morinaj, Marcin, & Hascher, 2019). Literature suggests that the teacher-student relationship is a significant factor in a child's success at school (Baker, 2006; O'Connor et al., 2011). Various factors impact on well-being and relationships and some of these are explored in this chapter. An understanding of historical responses to challenging behaviour in New Zealand schools, cultural considerations important for teachers to remember and current behaviour supports, policies and guidelines helps explain the New Zealand context. Learning and behaviour management theories and beliefs about student motivation underpin the decisions teachers make as they interact with students. This review of New Zealand and international literature explores the following aspects of challenging behaviour at school:

1. New Zealand historical context,
2. Cultural responsiveness,
3. Behaviour supports, policies and guidelines,
4. Learning and behaviour management theory and strategies,
5. Motivation, Attribution and Self-determination Theory,
6. Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach.

New Zealand Historical Context

Challenging behaviours are not new to educators, as they long have been—and continue to be—cause for concern in classrooms worldwide. How they have been

addressed, however, may differ from one education system to another. Some of the discussion about responses to challenging behaviour is contained in the literature about inclusive education or children with special educational needs (SEN). Hornby (2012) articulates the difference between social inclusion, which refers to the inclusion of children with a wide range of differences, needs and difficulties, and inclusive education which is specifically referring to children with SEN. He also discusses dilemmas between the rights of children with SEN to be educated with their peers and the challenges of labelling, goal setting, appropriate curricula, and support that can be offered by NZ teachers to children with SEN (Hornby, 2012). The focus of this study is not specifically children with SEN, but teachers' experiences with challenging behaviour in general.

In New Zealand, Macfarlane (2007) has outlined the evolution of support provided to children with challenging behaviour. He explains that in the 1880s, isolation and institutionalisation were the primary strategies used by adults who were dealing with challenging behaviour and that this behaviour was often viewed as stemming from child neglect or abandonment (Macfarlane, 2007). From 1900 to 1950, segregation in the form of special schools and special classes—along with an increase in residential school facilities—was typical for managing children with challenging behaviour. An emphasis on testing, labelling and categorisation of children with challenging behaviour was the norm between 1950 and 1980. From the 1980s to 1990s, the educational system made a shift from separation towards integration. Specific policies of mainstreaming and inclusion were introduced in the 1990s, intending to ensure the right of every child to attend a local state school (Macfarlane, 2007). In 2019 in New Zealand, mainstreaming is still the current policy and predominant practice despite evidence questioning its effectiveness (Hornby, 2012). There are few educational facilities that withdraw children from regular

schools or support children outside of mainstream school settings, and these facilities are typically for children at the extreme end of the disruptive behaviour continuum, or children who have other special needs (e.g., physical or intellectual; (Ministry of Education, 2018b, 2018c). There appear to be no major policy modifications since the mid-1990s that would signal that practices and procedures have changed over the past 25 years.

Currently, when New Zealand school children behave in unacceptable ways, official sanctions might include stand-down (i.e., temporary forced absence from school), suspension (i.e., removal from school until a school's Board of Trustees decides conditions for the child's return), or permanent exclusion from the school. In 2018, there were 19,412 stand-downs, 3,065 suspensions and 1,016 children excluded from their school in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Of the stand-downs, 88.8% were for the sorts of challenging behaviours described in the introduction. While it is acknowledged that these numbers represent very small percentages of the total number of students (1.7% for stand-downs) it must also be recognised that children are not usually stood down, suspended or excluded from school for minor offences or for the first occurrence of challenging behaviour. Teachers will have experienced many instances of challenging behaviour and tried many other strategies before these more serious sanctions are employed. The number of students being stood down has remained relatively consistent over the past two decades (Ministry of Education, 2019b).

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness is one of the terms used to discuss the relationship between ethnic or indigenous minorities and dominant cultures in various countries around the world. Cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate

respectfully with people of one's own culture as well as those from other cultures (National Centre for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, n.d.). In education, cultural responsiveness refers to the way that teachers, schools and education systems respond to, understand, and change the way they function to address the needs and aspirations of the various ethnic groups in their care (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

While New Zealand schools have children from many different cultural backgrounds, government policy (Ministry of Education, 2013a, 2013b) primarily addresses Māori and Pasifika peoples as priority target groups requiring special goals and strategies to address their needs. Māori as *tangata whenua*, (indigenous people) the original inhabitants of Aotearoa, New Zealand, have a special place in legislation based on the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2019). This founding document sets out the principles of the relationship between the Māori people and the colonising Europeans. Cultural responsiveness is considered in New Zealand schools primarily with regard to Māori because of their special status in law. Pasifika student needs are also considered because of the significant number of Pasifika students in the New Zealand schooling system and recognising New Zealand's place in the Pacific and the responsibilities New Zealand has regarding Pacific people (Ministry of Education, 2013b). Many other ethnicities are present in our schools, and these students also deserve their education to be culturally responsive.

Culturally responsive approaches in education have been discussed by a number of authors (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop, Berryman, & Wearmouth, 2014; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2016; Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011; Milne, 2013; Penetito, 2010). Bishop and Berryman (2006) discuss the concepts of *mana rangatiratanga* (self-determination and agency) and *whanaungatanga* (close connection between people). Durie (2003, p. 199) explains the goal of education as

enabling Māori to “live as Māori”. This goal became the vision for the Ministry of Education in its Māori education strategy, Kahikitia: Accelerating Success 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2013a) and includes five guiding principles: (1) Treaty of Waitangi, (2) Māori potential approach, (3) *ako* as a two-way learning and teaching process, (4) identity, language and culture count, and (5) productive partnerships. When culture, language and identity are ignored, the disconnection that is felt by students often exhibits in challenging behaviour (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2014; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2016; Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011; Milne, 2013; Penetito, 2010).

Behaviour Support, Policies and Guidelines

As of 2019, New Zealand’s Ministry of Education (MoE) currently shares three pages describing behaviour support on its website (Ministry of Education, n.d.). These pages outline different resources and support available to NZ schools through the MoE. The page titled “Support for schools to manage challenging student behaviour” (Ministry of Education, 2019c) presents two resources: Guidelines on the use of physical restraint (Ministry of Education, 2017) and, The Understanding Behaviour, Responding Safely (UBRS) workshop.

Other pages outline a number of programmes and resources that support schools with regard to student behaviour. These resources are a mix of proactive and development focussed programmes, such as Positive Behaviour 4 Learning (PB4L), and reactive supports, such as the Interim Response Fund or the Behaviour Crisis Response team. As well as these general resources the MoE also publishes other information aimed at supporting children with specific needs, for example, Supporting children and young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Ministry of Education, 2018e).

The Ministry's support has been classified as Tier One, Tier Two, or Tier Three support (Mitchell, 2010). Tier One resources are aimed at supporting all students and would be expected to be effective at meeting the needs of 80 – 90% of children. This kind of support includes the PB4L school-wide programme (Ministry of Education, 2015) and advice on de-escalation and bullying prevention strategies (Ministry of Education, 2018a). Tier Two supports include selective prevention strategies targeting 5-10% of the students whose needs are not met by Tier One support. For example, the assistance offered by Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) would generally be classified as Tier Two support. Tier Three support is for the children deemed to have the highest risk of failing at school because of the severity of their needs. Tier Three support targets between 1 - 5% of students. The Behaviour Crisis Response team is an example of Tier Three support.

Although these supports are sensible in theory, there might be gaps when implemented in practice. For example, it may be difficult for schools to access timely assistance for children and teachers requiring Tier Two support. Schools provide whatever supports they can from the expertise and experience of their staff but, as noted earlier, the effective inclusion of students with challenging behaviour is mostly the responsibility of the classroom teacher (Macfarlane, 2007). Gaps in support available to schools create pressure on teachers who have reached the end of their own resources to effect change. Professional development in CPS may alleviate some pressure by adding a tool that teachers are able to implement themselves.

Within the legislation and guidelines provided by the MoE, New Zealand schools have significant autonomy to develop their own policies and practices. Teachers use whatever strategies and resources they have in their repertoire to manage children with challenging behaviour. In New Zealand, typical school responses to challenging behaviour include consequence and reward systems,

temporary removal from the group or class, referral to a senior colleague, physical restraint, stand down, suspension and exclusion. After exhausting their own 'toolkit' of behaviour management strategies and within school resources, the next level of support sought by teachers is often from an RTLB (Ministry of Education, 2018d). The support that the RTLB service offers is primarily observation of children functioning in their classroom and suggestions of strategies for teachers to try. Although some teachers may want the 'problem' taken off their hands, it is rare for the RTLB to work directly with the child. More difficult to manage students might be referred to the MoE Special Education advisers or psychologists. Sometimes teachers experience the referral process to RTLB as a hoop that has to be jumped through before more targeted help can be accessed. Occasionally, students will be referred to psychological services or supports that come under the Ministry of Health umbrella, rather than through the MoE. Usually, any discussion about the child and their behaviour takes place at meetings between the teacher and other professionals involved (e.g. RTLB, Psychologist, Speech-Language Therapist, and Occupational Therapist). Many schools would also include Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), team leader or deputy principal in these meetings. The child's parents might also be invited to participate, although often this would be only at an Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. It would be unusual for the child being discussed to be present at any of these meetings.

Learning and Behaviour Management Theory

When thinking about the impact challenging behaviour has on teaching and learning, it is worth considering theories of learning and motivation. Behaviour management, taken on its own, only addresses behavioural concerns. Behaviour affects learning, just as the learning environment affects behaviour. Focussing

attention on learning theories may inform our understanding of behaviour and conversely, attention to behavioural management theories may contribute to our understanding of learning.

Kohn (1999) describes a classic model of schooling in terms of behaviourism. From this view, the transmission of knowledge comes from the teacher to the learner. The role of the teacher is to be at the front of the classroom, transferring knowledge into the heads of receptive listeners. The teacher is in charge, directing behaviour and behaviour change in the classroom. This view does not require much in the way of collaboration and the relationship between student and teacher is less significant under this model. Behaviourism has grown from the laboratory-focussed work of Pavlov, Watson and Skinner, where psychologists explored the associations between stimulus and response and the influence of environment in shaping behaviour (Schacter, Gilbert, Wegner, & Hood, 2016). In particular, Skinner described the principles of reinforcement, arguing that the consequences of behaviour determine whether it will be more or less likely to occur again (Schacter et al., 2016). Specifically, this school of thought assumes that behaviour is merely a response to present and past reinforcements and that the external environment is the initiator of all behaviour (Kohn, 1999; Schacter et al., 2016). From a behaviourist perspective, challenging behaviour would have developed because it has been rewarded and therefore is repeated. For example, in the classroom, a student might successfully avoid a task they do not want to do by engaging in a behaviour that distracts the focus from the expected task to something that requires more urgent intervention: “I hate writing, and when I tip furniture over during writing time, I get removed from the classroom and don’t have to do the writing task”.

While behaviourist theories are visible within the New Zealand schooling system, they have limitations in practice. From a behaviourist perspective, the person

who is initiating the change is a person who has agency, and when applied to the classroom, the teacher is the person with the greatest agency. In terms of attributing causes of a situation, behaviourist principles may come to surface when things are going well (e.g., “As a teacher, my praise is encouraging good behaviour in my classroom”). However, behaviouristic perspectives may become contested—and have serious implications for teachers—when unacceptable behaviour is encountered (e.g., “I’m an ineffective teacher because I am unable to use actions that prevent challenging behaviour from taking place”). Depending on their initial teacher education (ITE) and professional development experiences, teachers may rely on behaviourist interventions in attempts to predict and control student behaviour.

Contrasting with behaviourist theory, constructivism developed and had influenced the thinking of many educators in the later part of the 20th Century (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Kohn (1999) describes the constructivist model of schooling as progressive or non-traditional. He ascribes the origins of this model to the work of Jean Piaget and John Dewey and highlights the characteristics of a constructivist or progressive education as including learning as an active process involving social relationships and construction of ideas. Learning happens through discovery, invention, reflection and problem solving (Kohn, 1999). Constructivist theory suggests that a learning philosophy that seeks to understand the interests, experiences and social interactions of the student leads to a better understanding of how knowledge is constructed in the mind of the learner as opposed to being transferred by the teacher (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). For children with challenging behaviour, the need for adults to understand what they are thinking, what experiences they have had, what they are interested in and what influences their social interactions might be one of the keys to helping children learn to behave in more socially acceptable ways.

An understanding of underlying learning philosophies helps educators consider teachers' interpretations and responses to challenging behaviour. With a strong behaviourist learning philosophy, the type of challenge experienced by a teacher may be quite different from the challenge experienced by a teacher who has a different perspective. This is because these two teachers will have different expectations and appraisals of the student and the situation. Greene (2018) argues that a student's inability to meet adults' expectations of the situation can be the cause of challenging behaviour. It may be that there is a philosophical or cultural difference between the teacher and the child about what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. It may be that the teacher's underlying theoretical perspective and philosophy about what constitutes "good" teaching is clashing with the child's belief about what makes for "good" learning. For example, a student is reprimanded for talking during writing time and responds by throwing their book across the room and swearing at the teacher. The teacher might believe that writing is an individual activity that ought to be undertaken in silence with no social interaction between children. The student might find that talking about their ideas helps tremendously as part of their writing process. These two contrasting views of the best environment for writing set the teacher and child up for conflict. While recognising that nothing in education sits entirely at the extremes of any continuum, there is some value in a discussion of diverse perspectives as this sheds light on issues that need consideration.

Lindon (2012) outlines a number of different theoretical perspectives to explain behaviour. One of these developed by Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory, was derived from a behaviourist base but with the added dimension of children's behaviour being predicted by what they could directly observe in others around them. Bandura said that children are influenced by the rewards and punishments that they observe happening to others, that they learn not just behaviours

but also ideas, expectations and internal standards through modelling, and that they can learn to make choices and self-regulate their behaviour (Lindon, 2012).

Another perspective is Maturation Theory, which has a biological explanation and considers maturation and the ‘normal’ range of behaviours given the age of the child. Maturation Theory urges us to have realistic expectations of what is developmentally appropriate behaviour and what is not: “Without this basis, it is too easy to talk, or write, about ‘difficult’ or ‘challenging’ behaviour, when the actions of these individual children are unremarkable for their age” (Lindon, 2012, p. 11).

Young children have real limits on regulating their behaviour. They are often not able to talk about their thinking or reasons for behaving the way they have, and they have limited ability to understand the feelings or perspectives of others (Birch et al., 2017).

A component of physical maturation is brain and emotional development. Advances in neuroscience have led to an understanding of the effects of trauma on the brains and the social and emotional development of children (Howard, 2018; Mills et al., 2011; Romano, Babchishin, Marquis, & Fréchette, 2015). As teachers understand more about the function of the brain during emotional dysregulation, they might better respond in ways that calm the child’s brain, dissipate the stress hormones and allow the child to feel supported and safe (Howard, 2018). Becoming more aware of the effects of trauma on children’s development also helps teachers satisfy their desire to understand the causes of challenging behaviour. Because of their ongoing experiences of challenging behaviour, Christchurch teachers have become particularly interested in the findings of research into the effects of the 2011 earthquakes on children’s development (Liberty, Tarren-Sweeney, Macfarlane, Basu, & Reid, 2016).

Strong positive relationships between teacher and child have been shown to have positive benefits for school outcomes (Baker, 2006). High-quality relationships are described by O'Connor et al. (2011) as those having high levels of closeness and

low levels of conflict. They found that children with high-quality relationships with their teachers had fewer behavioural problems and they argue that high-quality teacher-student relationships may be critical for the successful implementation of strategies aimed at reducing behavioural problems (O'Connor et al., 2011). Low-quality relationships may lead to teachers attempting to control children's behaviour and limit their ability to provide a supportive environment (O'Connor et al., 2011). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) describe relatedness as involving secure and satisfying connections with others. Greene (2014) argues that the way to achieve a deep understanding of the child is through empathetic listening. It may be that stronger connections, forged through careful listening, will help teachers and children navigate the difficulties of challenging behaviour more effectively.

A quick online search and a scan of the library shelves immediately suggests that teachers dealing with difficult or challenging behaviour is a problem that many people have attempted to analyse, theorise and provide solutions for. Various authors outline many models, theories and strategies for managing behaviour in school (Taylor, 2004; Vaughn & Bos, 2012; Walker & Gresham, 2013). The Kounin Model, The Ginott Model, The Glasser Classroom Model, Dreikurs Conceptual Model, The Thomas Gordon Model, The Jones Model (Taylor, 2004) and dozens of other models and strategies for classroom behaviour management all provide their authors' take on how to address inappropriate, unacceptable, disruptive, antisocial, harmful behaviours. A scan of the literature (Cowley, 2006; Doig, 2000; Dunckley, 1999; Kohn, 1996; Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011; Meyer & Evans, 2012; Rogers, 2015; Taylor, 2004; Vaughn & Bos, 2012) suggests themes that the various models and strategies are aiming to address, with each model focussing attention on different aspects of the classroom setting. Many focus on environmental factors and ask the

teachers to change seating, timetabling, group size, subject timing, and length of sessions (Taylor, 2004; Vaughn & Bos, 2012).

Other models focus on the teacher-student relationship and the importance of understanding the student on a humanist level (Greene, 2016; Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011). Some focus on problem-solving, righting wrongs and examining questions of power and control in the classroom (Macfarlane, 2007; Meyer & Evans, 2012). Others focus on rewards and consequences (Cowley, 2006; Taylor, 2004), while some focus on whole-school strategies to prevent the behaviour from becoming challenging in the first place (Doig, 2000). Given the plethora of behaviour management models, theories and approaches it is somewhat surprising that challenging behaviour is still an issue of concern for teachers. Despite the fact that teachers develop high quality relationships with children, challenging behaviour still occurs. Reward or consequence systems designed to motivate children are often ineffective at eliciting the desired behaviour (Kohn, 1993). There seems to be an unresolved tension between behaviourist theory strategies employed by many teachers and constructivist or other theoretical perspectives with a focus on relationship and social construction of reality. Teachers who have invested time and energy into developing high quality relationships with children are left frustrated when challenging behaviour continues.

Teachers respond to challenging behaviour, either reactively or proactively. When responding reactively, the teacher is acting in response to a behaviour that has just happened, or they fear might be about to happen. A child picks a chair up in anger and appears ready to throw it across the room towards other children. There is an urgent need to respond, perhaps for the safety of others or to minimise the disruption to learning. Many authors present strategies or approaches for managing effective reactive responses (Dunckley, 1999; Faber & Mazlish, 1995; Marshall & Marshall,

1997; Rogers, 2015). Suggestions, for example, might include offering students a choice or distracting a student with a low demand activity.

Alternatively, proactive responses to challenging behaviour aim to identify triggers for the behaviour and remove, modify or minimise the effect of causal factors. Many of these strategies focus on changes to the environment (including the teacher's behaviour) as a preventative approach to challenging behaviour (Cowley, 2006; Doig, 2000; Faber & Mazlish, 1995; Rogers, 2015; Taylor, 2004; Vaughn & Bos, 2012). For example, a visual prompt timetable may assist a student who gets anxious about what activity is coming up next. A proactive approach has implications not only for the teacher-student dyad but also for the social experiences in the classroom. Sotardi (2018) focuses attention on children's stress and their coping strategies and argues that "teachers play a crucial role in identifying sources of stress and scaffolding adaptive coping strategies" (Sotardi, 2018, p. 210) to help children learn healthy ways to cope with stress. Kohn (1993) argues that many of the strategies employed by teachers are aimed at controlling children's behaviour through coercion and a desire for compliance with teacher expectations. Ideas of control and compliance are woven through many of the behaviour management strategies discussed above. An understanding of all these different perspectives helps us build a picture of the influencing factors and motivations that might inform analysis of what is happening for children when they behave in problematic ways.

Motivation, Attribution and Self-determination

Cause and effect are present in the interaction between student and teacher in situations that the teacher might describe as challenging. The child is behaving in a certain way because of some underlying cause or factor that has triggered their response. The teacher is challenged because of the child behaving in a way that they

find unacceptable, and they have a strong desire to understand why the child is behaving this way. While some circumstances or underlying explanations for challenging behaviour may be outside the child's ability to control, it seems important to consider how teachers think about causes of challenging behaviour and how challenging behaviour related situations might constrain self-determination of those involved in the classroom. Theories of motivation may, therefore, add to an understanding of challenging behaviour.

Two theories of motivation have relevance to this study. First, causal attribution theory (Weiner, 1972) recognises that individuals will attribute intention or cause to behaviours, especially when a situation is unexpected or undesirable. Teachers do this in their search for explanations of the cause for challenging behaviour and in the attention they pay to their failed attempts to prevent challenging behaviour. Teachers pay little attention to the many instances where their actions have avoided challenging behaviour happening in the first place. Attribution Theory explains behaviour as being caused by either internal or external factors. Internal causes refer to motives, personality and beliefs that originate within the person. External, or situational, causes are those forces outside of the individual's control. In application to classroom situations, teachers may attribute causes or origins to behaviours in an attempt to make sense of the situation. Teachers may respond differently to students depending on the adults' beliefs about cause, capacity to act, and motivation that they attribute to students. People tend to believe that their own behaviour is influenced by environmental factors while the behaviour of others is often attributed to personal traits (Weiner, 1972). Miller (2003) explains that attributions are not objective truths but are the result of inferences and that teachers often act based on their attributions rather than other sources of information.

Attributing children's challenging behaviour at school to parents' action, inaction, or other home factors is a common practice of teachers according to Miller (2003).

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2008) identifies autonomy, competence and relatedness as three components necessary for a person to develop intrinsic motivation. Autonomy refers to "being the perceived origin or source of one's own behaviour" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 7). Autonomously motivated individuals have a feeling of control or volition over their actions in contrast to being controlled by external forces (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It is possible that students who feel controlled by the teacher respond with challenging behaviour in an attempt to reclaim autonomy. Competence refers to the feeling of confidence in one's ability to act effectively (Deci & Ryan, 2002). A student who feels unable to complete the assigned task may engage in challenging behaviour to deflect attention from their lack of confidence or sense of shame. Relatedness refers to the connections and sense of caring for and being cared for by others. It is a sense of belonging both to individuals and a community (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Students with a strong sense of connection to a teacher may moderate their behaviour because of their respect for the relationship.

A central argument of SDT is that people thrive if they feel that they have autonomous control over their goals and activities rather than being controlled by external or internalised forces (Assor, Feinberg, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2018). Intrinsic motivation is an element within SDT, and is described as "doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself" (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, p. 71). Ryan and Deci (2000a) also offer a definition of extrinsic motivation that differs from the rewards and reinforcements of behaviourism. They make the distinction between students performing extrinsically motivated tasks with resentment, resistance or disinterest contrasted with willingness and acceptance of the value of the task. They discuss a continuum of motivation which includes extrinsic motivation that has an

internal locus of causality and is characterised by congruence, awareness and synthesis with self (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). They state “because many of the tasks that educators want their students to perform are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, knowing how to promote more active and volitional (versus passive and controlling) forms of extrinsic motivation becomes an essential strategy for successful teaching” (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p. 55). Deci et al. (1991) argue that the behaviour of teachers has an important effect on student motivation especially the extent to which they support student autonomy versus controlling student behaviour.

Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan (2003) present a criticism that has been levelled at SDT in that the emphasis on autonomy does not match with the experience of people from cultures that value relatedness and group cohesion. To explain how SDT applies to collectivist cultures they differentiate between autonomy and individualism and argue that, “a person is autonomous when his or her behaviour is experienced as willingly enacted and when he or she fully endorses the actions in which he or she is engaged and/or the values expressed by them” (Chirkov et al., 2003, p. 98). New Zealand teachers would need to consider whether this distinction between autonomy and individualism is relevant for their particular setting. Many Māori and Pasifika students (and indeed other ethnicities) might relate more strongly to collectivist ideas of group cohesion in contrast to an individualist idea of autonomy.

SDT seems to have many parallel ideas to those evident in the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach (Greene, 2014). Deci and Ryan (2002) draw together the same factors that Greene’s approach advocates for; student agency, strong positive relationships, and feelings of competence or ability to meet the expectations of the situation.

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) Approach

Teachers are sometimes unsure about how to respond effectively to challenging behaviour. Many of their go-to strategies seek to motivate students through the use of rewards or consequences, and when these are ineffective teachers can be left feeling frustrated and searching for alternative approaches. Greene (2011) argues that challenging behaviour is caused not by a lack of motivation but by lagging skills. Kohn (1993) and Greene (2014) suggest that rewards or consequences may not make things better. Greene (2014) argues that adults should rather identify the problems that children are experiencing and work to help them solve these problems. Considering alternative approaches to aid with challenging behaviour is needed. One approach—Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS)—could be more effective in reducing the incidence of challenging behaviour at school.

The CPS model focuses on having empathy for the student and working collaboratively with them to remove the problems that are stopping them meeting the expectations at school, and plan collaboratively for solutions that meet the student and the teacher's needs (Greene, 2018). This collaborative approach is very different from the control and coercion inherent in the rewards or consequences of a behaviourist strategy. Two foundational beliefs underpin the CPS approach: children do well when they can do well, and it is always better to do well than not do well. The belief that it is always better to do well, is about motivation and argues that students are mostly intrinsically motivated to do well. These beliefs focus the attention on lagging skills rather than student motivation.

To aid with the identification of lagging skills, Greene (2017) has developed a tool called the Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP). The ALSUP consists of a series of prompts that ask the person conducting the assessment to describe the situations in which the child is having difficulty meeting the

expectations. Greene argues that there is little to be gained by focussing the attention on problematic behaviour but that, as adults, we need to understand the unmet expectation, lagging skill, and unsolved problems that are causing the frustration or difficulty that presents as unacceptable behaviour. The child who has tipped over tables or sworn at the teacher in anger has done so because he or she is unable to meet the expectation of the current situation. In this example the expectation is not that children do not swear or tip over tables. The expectation is whatever the child was unable to do that led to their frustration, swearing and table tipping. Once the correct problem is identified and understood, the adults supporting the child can set about teaching the lagging skills and solving the problems with the child. Teaching lagging skills as early as possible might also address the concern expressed by Church (Church & University of Canterbury Education Department Team, 2003) that, unless intervention happens, children with challenging behaviour grow up to become antisocial adults who experience a number of adverse outcomes in their lives. The CPS approach might aid the development of coping skills (Sotardi, 2018) and help reduce student stress and consequential challenging behaviour.

The CPS model identifies three ways that adults can solve problems with children. Greene (2014) calls these Plan A, Plan B and Plan C. Plan A is the typical response in many schools and involves the adults deciding unilaterally on solutions and strategies and then informing the child what is to happen. Plan A solutions are often tackled with a behaviourist response of rewards or consequences. In some instances, these strategies can effect positive change, but Greene (2014) and Kohn (1996) argue that they are not usually effective in the long term. Behavioural interventions in the form of rewards or consequences do not require any attention to the reasons that the trouble developed in the first place (Kohn, 1993). Kohn also argues that “rewards are not conducive to developing and maintaining the positive

relationships that promote optimal learning or performance (Kohn, 1993, p. 55).

Rewards and consequences also shift the influence of the relationship between teacher and student to some external motivator.

Unlike Plan A, which has the adults deciding the solutions, Plan B involves the child in finding solutions collaboratively. Plan B has three main steps: Empathy Step, Define Adult Concerns Step, and Invitation Step. The ‘Empathy Step’ is where the adult states the observed difficulty, asks the child for more information, and listens carefully in order to understand what the child is thinking. The difficulty the child is having is not the challenging behaviour, but rather the circumstance or trigger to the challenging behaviour. It is the adults’ expectation that the child is not able to meet that the child is having difficulty with. A typical Empathy Step introduction, from the adult having a Plan B conversation with a child, might go something like this; “I have noticed you are having difficulty with(insert expectation, not the disruptive behaviour). What’s up?” The adult continues to use questions or reflective listening strategies to elicit the child’s concerns about the situation. Such questioning aims to get to the specifics of motivation rather than accepting a more general conclusion that a child is unmotivated. The second step is, ‘Define Adult Concerns’, and is where the adult expresses the reasons to the child that the behaviour is problematic, how it affects the child and others, and why a solution is needed. The final step is called ‘Invitation’. This is where the child and adult work collaboratively to find mutually acceptable solutions that address the child’s concerns expressed in the Empathy Step and the adult concerns articulated in the Define Adult Concerns Step.

Students with lagging skills may have a significant number of skill deficits and may experience a large number of problems associated with the conflicts they become embroiled in. It would be impossible to attempt to address all the problems at

the same time. Plan C is where the adults prioritise the identified, unsolved problems or difficulties and actively decide to not deal with or place any attention on the less urgent problems while focussing a Plan B response on the most significant difficulties. Once the most urgent problems have been solved, Plan C problems become Plan B problems.

There appears to be very little published research about the CPS approach in mainstream school settings (Greene, 2019c; Greene & Winkler, 2019). Research that has been undertaken is set in clinical settings, youth justice facilities (Greene, Ablon, & Martin, 2006) or treatment programmes with children who often have diagnosed behaviour disorders such as oppositional defiance disorder (Greene, 2019c; Greene et al., 2004). Much of the research involves parent training and parent-child relationships (Booker, Ollendick, Dunsmore, & Greene, 2016; Ollendick et al., 2016). I could find no research conducted within regular school settings that focussed on the teacher-child relationship or the teacher's experience of the CPS approach. Laura Oxley is a UK based researcher exploring alternative approaches to behaviour management in schools through the research question, “Why are interventionist approaches the predominant means of responding to student behaviour in English schools?” (Oxley, nd). In personal communication with her (Oxley, 2019) she confirmed that she also had been unable to find research about the CPS approach in regular school settings. The research evidence that shows the CPS approach as effective for helping with severe behavioural challenges suggests that CPS could be worth exploring for helping all students who demonstrate challenging behaviour. The focus that the CPS approach has on the development of strong positive relationships between students and teachers is an important reason that teachers might want to add this approach to their toolkit. Both the collaborative and proactive aspects of the CPS approach may contribute to reducing instances of challenging behaviour.

Although Greene (2014) promotes the CPS approach as an appropriate tool for teachers, a significant criticism could be that the time required to complete assessments of lagging skills and have meaningful Plan B conversations is unrealistic for teachers within the New Zealand school context. A second challenge is whether teachers have sufficient skill, time and material support to be able to teach any of the lagging skills that are identified through the assessment process. A third challenge for New Zealand teachers would be integrating the assessment and reporting aspects of using a CPS approach with the assessment and reporting tools they are already required to use to satisfy school, RTLB and Ministry of Education requirements. Weaver (2016) disagrees with Greene's assertion that rewards are an ineffective tool for motivating children to manage their behaviour. Many New Zealand teachers may agree with Weaver and also are likely to interact with professionals (RTLB, SENCO, Educational Psychologists) who share Weaver's perspective and who may give conflicting advice that teachers would have to navigate.

Summary

An understanding of the historical response to challenging behaviour and the cultural factors that need to be considered by those in the education system provides a context for discussion about how schools respond to children's challenging behaviour. Teachers' beliefs and expectations about learning and children's motivation, impact significantly on the choices they make in selecting strategies to reduce challenging behaviour in their classrooms. The CPS approach is a tool that may help teachers gain an understanding of children's motivations and difficulties and strengthen the relationship between teacher and child. This research aims to explore teachers' experience of challenging behaviour and their perceptions of the usefulness of the CPS approach in reducing challenging behaviour.

Chapter Three: Methodology

To understand the reality of challenging behaviour, one must also understand whose reality is being examined (Mertens, 2015). One way of examining teachers' reality of challenging behaviour is via a case study. This case study explores the experiences of a small group of primary school teachers as they manage challenging behaviour in the classroom.

A case study is the examination of a particular phenomenon within a specific context (Simons, 2009). Swanborn (2010) gives a broad definition of case study including that it refers to the study of a social phenomenon carried out within the boundaries of one social system (the case). According to Yin (2014), case study is an appropriate research approach when one cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study when one wants to cover contextual conditions because they may be relevant, or the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. This research could be considered a single case study because all the participants teach at one school. Thomas (2011) describes "nested" case study as a way of thinking about how subunits fit in with a broader context. In this case, the individual teachers, classrooms and students all have characteristics and stories that mean a nested case interpretation could be brought to the research within the single case study this one school represents.

Case study as a research methodology comprises two specific elements: the subject and the object—or analytical frame—of the case (Thomas, 2011). The subject of this study is a group of primary school teachers at a school in Christchurch. The analytical frame consists of two objects: teachers' experiences of challenging behaviour in their classrooms, and teachers' thoughts about the usefulness of the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach.

Teachers are the focus of this study. As the adults with primary responsibility for managing students at school, teachers have a significant role in the effectiveness or otherwise of school environments. Given more time and resource, I would ideally have also investigated students' and parents' perceptions of challenging behaviour. Because of the impact challenging behaviour has on the lives and relationships of many people, teacher response to challenging behaviour at school is well worth deeper exploration.

In the first part of this study, two parallel phenomena are linked to the context. The first, challenging behaviour, is inextricably related to the context of school. Children can, of course, be challenging at home. Sometimes they are challenging in ways that are similar to the challenges they present at school, but sometimes the challenges are quite different. While acknowledging that challenging behaviour and its causes are a significant part of this discussion, the phenomenon most of interest is the teacher's experience of challenging behaviour. The beliefs they bring and the feelings they have about their interactions with children are of great interest. The second phase of this study involved introducing teachers to the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach and the Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP) (Greene, 2017). This aspect of the study is about education, not intervention. No attempt has been made to measure or quantify in any way a difference in teacher's experience, attitude, belief, feelings or actions in a post-intervention manner. The research question only asks for teachers to reflect on how useful they think the CPS approach is, after having been briefly introduced to the ideas and given a short period of time to trial the approach.

While understanding the limitations of a case study, the method has advantages (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011). A case study is strong in reality because it is "down to earth and attention holding, in harmony with the reader's own

experience, and thus provides a ‘natural’ basis for generalization” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 292). Another strength is that a case study can be a step to action. Learning from case studies may contribute to changes in policy, institutional practices and individual professional development (Cohen et al., 2011). I hope that the current research might be useful to teachers as they contemplate the issues surrounding challenging behaviour and, perhaps, lead to constructive discussions around school policy and procedures.

Researcher as Participant

As one of the Deputy Principals at the case school, I am often required to provide support when teachers are experiencing behaviour that is challenging. Over my ten years of experience in school leadership positions, teachers have frequently expressed to me various frustrations related to managing and helping children with challenging behaviour. Because this research was conducted within my own school, with teacher colleagues I am currently working with, and we were discussing children whom I know and have relationships with, it could be argued that I am a participant in this research rather than an objective observer. I have conducted the research as objectively as possible and have not let it become a participatory action research study (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). However, I recognise that my biases and opinions will inevitably affect any interpretations I make about the data. Beach, Becker, and Kennedy (2006) state that researchers must address the potential impact of their prior experience and knowledge of the subject on any research study. A researcher should consider any findings alongside their prior knowledge like pieces of a puzzle that fit together. The problem, they contend, “is not one of how to put aside prior knowledge but rather one of how to capitalise on prior knowledge and use it to extract as much *new knowledge* as possible from the findings” (Beach et al., 2006, p. 502). My

experience in supporting teachers and children as they navigate the challenges at school has no doubt influenced the questions I have chosen to ask, the codes and themes I have developed from the data and my interpretations of the findings.

Method

Data gathering was conducted in two phases. Phase one explored teachers' experiences of challenging behaviour in the classroom. Phase two introduced teachers to the CPS approach (Greene, 2014) and asked the question: What are primary school teachers' perceptions and practical considerations of CPS as a useful approach to reduce challenging behaviours in the classroom?

Research Approval and Ethical Issues

The research proposal was presented to the school's Board of Trustees and permission was sought to recruit participants (Appendix A). The Board approved the research being undertaken in the school, and ethical approval was granted by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (2019/18/ERHEC, Appendix B).

Consideration was given to ethical issues of confidentiality of participants and psychological risks associated with participants communicating their opinions and ideas. Confidentiality has been managed by the use of identifiers, such as Teacher 1. Since people may disclose thoughts or ideas in a group session that they may later regret having said, this risk was minimised by reminding participants about the confidentiality of group discussions and the need to respect other people's thoughts and opinions. Teachers could also find interactions with children exhibiting challenging behaviour stressful, as recounting these interactions may elicit emotions that teachers find upsetting. This psychological risk was prepared for by monitoring teacher responses (e.g., comments and body language), interactions, and participants

were reminded that they could stop or postpone the interview, leave the focus group, or move on to other questions. Participants were offered access to the school supports that already exist for staff well-being. These include seeking help from someone in the leadership team, counselling or referral to Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Services Ltd.

Case Setting

The school was established after the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes as part of the reshaping of the Christchurch education network (Ministry of Education, 2012). As of 2019, there are approximately 570 students ranging in age from 5 to 13 years old. The school has six large classrooms designed to accommodate approximately 100 children in each room, taught by four or five teachers in each class space. All of the classes are multi-year level (Year 1-2, 2-3, 4-6 and 7-8) with, additionally, one class being a Māori bilingual programme with students from Years 1-8. Five of the six school classrooms are represented in this study covering approximately 480 pupils. Children in these classes are aged between five years old and approximately ten years old in the Year 6 classes and up to 13 years old in the Year 1-8 bilingual classroom. A mix of ethnicities comprise the student population, with approximately 60% NZ European, 29% Māori, 6% Pasifika and the remaining 5% comprising 11 other nationalities.

My hope was that six to eight teachers might volunteer to participate. At the end of the recruitment period, 13 teachers offered their time and I felt that rather than excluding some I would interview all 13 and let their experiences and stories add to the richness of data. While this increased number significantly added to the transcription and thematic analysis workload, the value of gathering input from a wider group and the insights they shared made it a very rewarding experience. All 13

participants attended both of the information sessions about CPS. The focus group session was attended by 10 of the 13 original participants. Those unable to attend were invited to email or write a reflection if they had anything they wanted to contribute to this part of the research. None chose to do so.

Teacher participants have a range of classroom teaching experience from six years to more than thirty years. One of the participants is the school's special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and is fully released from teaching to fulfil her role. One of the teachers works as part of the release team in various classrooms across the school releasing teachers for their classroom release time (CRT). Four of the teachers are also team leaders with leadership responsibility for a studio of approximately 100 children taught by four or five teachers. One of the teachers was the only research participant in her classroom while the other ten classroom teachers all worked in classrooms where at least one other person was also participating in the research.

Invitation to Participants

Once ethical approval for the research to proceed was granted, I presented a brief outline of the research proposal at a staff administration meeting. Copies of the information for teachers (Appendix C), the 1:1 interview questions (Appendix D) and the focus group questions (Appendix E) were available at that meeting. Teachers were invited to take the information away and to email or speak in person to me if they were interested in participating or would like more information. They were reminded that there was no pressure to participate, and no coercion was undertaken to encourage them to volunteer.

Data Collection

Data for Phase One were gathered from two sources: (a) individual interviews, and (b) teachers' optional journal reflections. Phase Two data were gathered through focus group discussion. Interviews and focus group sessions were a maximum of one hour in duration. They took place at school during the teachers' classroom release time (CRT) or at some other mutually-agreed time. All teachers at the case school write regular journal reflections about their practice. They choose who they share these reflections with. As an optional way of communicating their thoughts about challenging behaviour and the CPS approach participants were invited to share with me any reflections relevant to this study. Three teachers chose to share their thoughts via journal reflection or email. Data gathering was conducted between April and August 2019. Between Phase One and Phase Two data collections, two education sessions were held to introduce teachers to the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach and the Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP). No data were gathered from these sessions, as they were just information sharing and education.

Following the copyright and trademark information on the Lives in the Balance website (Greene, 2019b), I made it explicit to those attending the education sessions that I am not a certified CPS trainer and that I was presenting my best understanding of the application of the CPS model to educational contexts. I explained that I hold no affiliation with Dr Greene. All participants were given a booklet (Appendix F), compiled by me, comprising some of the key resources (used with permission) available from Dr Greene's Lives in the Balance website (Greene, 2019a). Additionally, at three subsequent sessions, I supported class teaching teams by coaching them through the completion of the ALSUP assessment on a child in

their class. These groups included teachers who were participants in the case study and their team colleagues who were not case study participants.

Phase One Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method for gathering Phase One data. Teachers were provided with a working definition of challenging behaviour (Appendix G) and asked to describe their experiences of challenging behaviour and tools or strategies they use to support students with challenging behaviour. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by me.

Burns (2000) describes semi-structured interviews, contrasting them with both unstructured and structured interviews and says that rather than having a specific interview schedule, or none at all, semi-structured interviews use an interview guide that is developed to give direction to the interview but in a less prescriptive manner than a formal interview schedule allows. This seemed to be an appropriate choice of method which allowed teachers to widen the scope of their answers and for me to ask other questions as they came to mind during each interview, while also being conscious of my own potential biases and not leading participants towards particular responses. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) suggest piloting the questions prior to interviewing participants. I achieved this step by trialling the interview questions with the first study participant. At the beginning of the interview, she was asked if she would be willing to give specific feedback about the quality of the questions and whether she felt that they canvassed the topic sufficiently and allowed her to explain her experience to a depth that she felt was valuable. I also asked her if there were any questions she thought I had left out or any that I had included that were not useful. Based on her feedback, I added two questions to my initial list of nine interview questions. These were a question about how the experience of dealing with

challenging behaviour made teachers feel and a summary question that asked teachers to reflect on all the things we had talked about and tell me the one thing that they found the most challenging or difficult (Appendix D).

Phase Two Data Collection

Phase Two data were collected through a focus group session. I introduced the purpose of the session and gave a paper copy of the focus group questions (Appendix E) along with a brief elaboration of the questions and a reminder about confidentiality and how anonymity would be handled in the reporting. The focus group questions had been emailed out to all participants one week prior to the focus group meeting to allow them adequate time to consider the questions and gather their thoughts. The participants were split into two groups of five, and the audio of the conversations was recorded for both groups. Each group was given a piece of A3 paper and asked to summarise main ideas from their discussion. At the conclusion, the groups were brought back together to report their discussion to the other group of participants. The audio recordings were transcribed and, along with the written summary sheets, were thematically analysed.

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) assert that focus groups are a useful method when the interaction among interviewees is likely to yield the best information and when they are similar to and cooperative with each other. Watts and Ebbutt (1987) highlight the advantages of group interviews including that there is potential for discussion to develop that may result in a wider range of responses. Two main reasons justify conducting group interviews rather than individual interviews for the second phase of this study. First, having more than one interviewee present allows complementary or contrasting ideas to be explored in greater detail with clarification and additional ideas generating naturally from the flow of conversation (Cohen et al.,

2011). The participants had all attended the same education sessions and the focus group questions were asking them to reflect on the same specific evaluation of the CPS approach. While individual teachers will have different perspectives on the usefulness of the CPS approach, a collective view lends some power to any recommendations that might come out of the discussion. Second, efficiency was important (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987), and a collective voice can gather richer data more quickly than conducting individual interviews.

Data Analysis and Reporting

A thematic analysis based on the interview, focus group, and optional teacher reflections (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) was conducted. Thematic analysis is a process used in qualitative research which assists the researcher in the search for insight into the phenomena of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, I sought to identify common threads within each of the 1:1 interviews, focus groups, researcher case notes, and teacher journal reflections and emails. An inductive approach to analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and constant comparative method (Thomas, 2011) were used, with the themes emerging from the specific ideas represented from each data source (for example 1:1 interviews) to broader generalisations or common themes. The two main data sources (1:1 interviews about teachers experience of challenging behaviour and focus group discussion about the effectiveness of the CPS approach) were analysed independently and the results reported in separate sections of the results chapter. Journal reflections and emails were analysed and the data included with either the interview or the focus group data as appropriate to the content.

Braun and Clarke (2006) identify six steps in conducting thematic analysis:

- Familiarisation with the data

- Generating initial codes
- Searching for themes
- Reviewing themes
- Defining and naming themes
- Producing the report

Step one involves familiarising oneself with the data. Having been the interviewer, I then listened to the recorded interviews as I transcribed them. Reading through the completed transcriptions, meant that I interacted with the content at least three times before starting to code. Step 2 involved reading through the transcripts again and generating initial codes. I trialled several different methods of recording the codes including using comments in MS Word, post-it notes and writing directly onto the transcripts. I conducted three complete reading and coding passes through the interview responses. The first pass involved writing on the transcripts, making notes of potential codes as I went. For the second pass, I worked through the interview transcripts line by line and copied each separate concept or idea into a line in a spreadsheet. Each line was given an initial code, and also the location of the idea was recorded so that once sorting into themes began it would be possible to find any particular idea and go back to review the context in which it sat. I also added a code for the interview question so that responses could be sorted by question as well as by thematic code.

Step 3 of the thematic analysis involves searching for themes. Some initial ideas were starting to develop as I worked through the coding. To facilitate a structured approach, I physically printed the entire spreadsheet and cut up the separate ideas and then grouped them as the ideas seemed to go together. Through this process, codes were grouped and combined and themes constructed as meaningful patterns

emerged from the clustering of ideas. This circular review process (Step 4) was repeated several times until all the lines of transcribed text had been coded. A summary table was created that identified the theme, subtheme, code, definition or elaboration of the code and three or four examples of text that the code had been applied to (Step 5). Journal reflections and relevant emails from participants were also coded and included in this data. This document was reviewed by my supervisors and changes made based on their feedback.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) sixth step is the write up of the analysis, presented for this study in the results chapter. Findings have been reported as a description of the themes that have emerged punctuated with examples and narrative from the transcription (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; Simons, 2009). I have chosen to report the results in a narrative descriptive manner because I believe this best matches the topic and the data gathered as well as meeting the claim by Cohen et al. (2011) that case study reporting must meet the twin notions of 'fitness for purpose' and 'fitness for audience'. I have written with teacher colleagues in mind as the intended audience and hope that the style of reporting allows them to access meaning, make comparisons to their own experience and generate questions about their own practice. I agree with Simons (2009) summation of the power of storytelling and the focus that it places on the reader or listener as much as on the writer. Storytelling attempts to engage the reader's feelings and emotions (Simons, 2009). I have included three examples of lengthy portions of the transcription for illustrative purposes and so that the reader can see, the wider context.

Reliability and Validity

Simons (2009) suggests that triangulation and respondent validation contribute to validity and that the relationships developed in the field facilitate the gathering of

quality data that accurately represents the phenomena of interest and that leads to valid meaning being made of the particular context. This study addresses triangulation of perspective through the use of thematic analysis of the teachers 1:1 interviews. Review of theme development and coding decisions by the thesis supervisors also contributes to validity. Respondent validation (Simons, 2009) was sought by providing draft results to the participants and inviting them to give feedback on the accuracy and adequacy of the representations and interpretations of their ideas. I believe that the relationships I have with the teacher participants have enabled quality data to be gathered and that any concerns about teacher responses being affected by a power imbalance created by my gender or my position as Deputy Principal are minimal.

Summary

A qualitative case study methodology using semi-structured interviews and optional journal reflections gathered data about teachers' experience of challenging behaviour. Teachers were introduced to the CPS approach, and a focus group gathered data on their opinion of the usefulness of the CPS approach in their interactions with children whose behaviour they found challenging. Data were analysed thematically.

Chapter Four: Data Narratives

My go-to things don't work anymore.

They used to work with the most tricky,

but now our most trickies are a bit trickier (Teacher 3).

This chapter presents the findings from the research narratives in two sections. The first section contains the thematic analysis of the 1:1 teacher interviews, emails and journal reflections answering the research question: What are primary school teacher's perspectives of challenging behaviour at school? The second section describes the thematic analysis of the focus group session where teachers responded to questions related to the research question: What are primary school teachers' perceptions and practical considerations of CPS as a useful approach to help teachers manage challenging behaviours in the classroom? Results include a thematic analysis of the data and narrative description to tell the stories and share teachers' insights.

Teacher Perspectives of Challenging Behaviour

My aim for the first phase of this study was to explore teachers' experiences of challenging behaviour in the classroom. I was interested in the knowledge and beliefs teachers brought to their interactions with children, the strategies teachers employed to manage and prevent challenging behaviour, and how teachers felt about their experiences. This section presents themes, subthemes and codes that emerged from the thematic analysis, as well as the full transcripts of three relevant stories. These stories are illustrative of the themes and subthemes. They offer contextual nuance that might have been missed through the line-by-line coding and thematic analysis.

Allostasis and Control

At the broadest thematic level, teachers in this study spoke about challenging behaviour in terms of stability and controllability. These core themes are referred to as “allostasis” and “control’.” Specifically, allostasis is the process of re-establishing stability in response to a challenge (Schulkin, 2004). Coined from the Greek words ‘allo’ meaning variable and ‘stasis’ meaning stability, allostasis refers to maintaining stability by changing or responding variably. Most frequently this term is used, along with the term homeostasis, to refer to the maintenance of stability in physical or psychological systems (Schulkin, 2004); however, in this study, allostasis is used to describe what teachers do and how they think about dealing with challenging behaviour that indicate their desire for social cohesion and stability in their classrooms.

In this study, teachers expressed the desire for the classroom environment to be stable. Teachers also recognised that variability and change are a part of everyday classroom life, and thus effective teachers must be able to work effectively with children who engage in behaviours that upset this stability. In this context, teachers communicated that stability is likely to take place when (a) teachers and learners are able to play their roles without undue interruption, (b) all involved have both physical and emotional safety, and (c) socially-acceptable behaviours are established, practised, and upheld. Behaviours that upset this stability are perceived as challenging. It is worth noting that stability is not about having quiet and compliant students, but whether the behaviours are within the bounds of accepted norms for that classroom and the level of disruption behaviours cause when they are outside these bounds. Another aspect of variability that teachers recognise is the need to respond to children in different ways. Children and their behaviours are complex, and teachers understand that one standardised response will not meet the individual needs of

children. Teachers also understand that children's needs change over time and so the ways that they respond to children must also change.

In addition to aspects of stability, teachers in this study commented on the need to have control (e.g., influence, power, and agency) whenever moments of tension arise in the classroom. Teacher responses in the 1:1 interviews imply a common view that challenging behaviour represents a disruption to their socially accepted norms for classroom behaviour, that the teacher's responsibility is to maintain control of the classroom environment, and that losing this control may result in various undesirable outcomes.

In sum, at the broadest thematic level, teachers in this study appeared to have realistic understandings and interpretations of classroom life. First, participants implied that having stability and controllability over the environment are ingredients necessary to form a calm, cohesive classroom. Second, participants inferred that classrooms are in constant flux, and therefore, variability and change are characteristics for which effective teachers must be prepared. Third, actions that contravene established social norms and expectations of a stable environment may be perceived by teachers as challenging behaviour. Teachers' actions, thoughts, and feelings about challenging behaviour may offer important insight into how educators strive to achieve allostasis and regain control.

Challenging Behaviour: Teachers' Actions and Thoughts

Within the overarching themes of allostasis and control, two main themes and six subthemes emerged from the thematic analysis.

Table 1. Themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
What teachers do: Actions	Reactive strategies

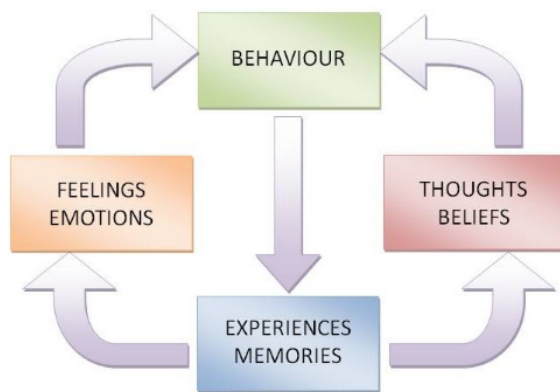
	Proactive strategies Help
What teachers think: Beliefs and Feelings	Beliefs Feelings Theories about cause

Broadly, teachers in this study shared that their actions and thoughts about challenging behaviour are likely to influence one another. As expressed, teachers may try to do something to achieve allostasis. Teachers also try to make decisions and act in specific ways that show their intention to regain control of the situation and return the classroom environment to a state of equilibrium. As will be presented, teachers in this study described their reactive and proactive strategies and the ways they seek help when confronted by challenging behaviour. In addition to their actions, participants communicated a message that teachers are not robots. Their actions are not pre-programmed and conducted without any thought on their part, nor are their actions without an emotional cost. As presented in the subsequent sections, teachers' beliefs and feelings about their classrooms and students play a powerful role in how they might respond to challenging behaviour.

The decisions teachers make and actions they take are driven by certain beliefs or acceptance that something is true and therefore, this action is appropriate in this situation. The outcomes of teacher action generate feelings or emotions, either positive or negative, as a result of whatever happens next. Actions, beliefs and feelings are all part of the experience process.

The following model illustrates the relationship between these elements (Marchant, 2015).

Figure 1. Behaviour cycle



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The way that thoughts, beliefs, emotions and feelings contribute to the actions or behaviours that teachers engage in directly creates the experience that teachers have. The experience either reinforces or challenges the teacher's beliefs and creates positive feelings that suggest to the teacher they have made a good choice of strategy or approach. Alternatively, teachers experience negative feelings that have them asking for help or searching for a more effective strategy. The results of this study showed the tight interaction between beliefs, feelings and actions.

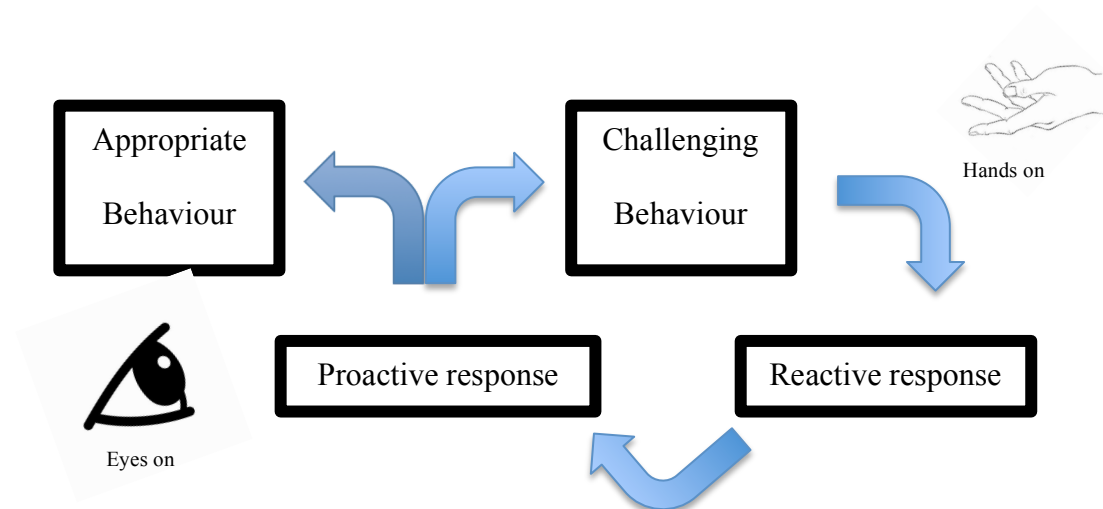
At times during the coding process, it was difficult to decide whether the example was a belief or an action. For example, when teachers have talked about giving students choice, in some instances, this idea was explicitly an action that the teacher was describing, and in other cases the idea of choice was expressed in the context of what the teacher believed about learning activities. Both ideas have been captured, and coding decisions were influenced by the wider context. In other cases an idea could have been a feeling or a belief and in the same manner were coded as the context indicated. Teachers believe something to be true or that an action is appropriate given the circumstances and these beliefs influence the actions they take. Teachers also respond emotionally to their experiences and have described the effect that challenging behaviour has on their feelings, energy levels and job satisfaction.

What Teachers Do: Actions

Teachers in this study described various strategies they use or have used to manage challenging behaviour in the classroom. Based on participant commentaries, teachers' actions were organised across three related subthemes: reactive, proactive, and help.

The first two subthemes of reactive and proactive strategies need to be understood within the context of the cycle of response that teachers go through when they encounter behaviour that is challenging. The following diagram was developed from the thematic analysis which clearly identified a distinction between immediate reactive response, “in the heat of the moment”, and proactive responses aimed at reducing or eliminating challenging behaviour from happening.

Figure 2 Challenging behaviour response cycle



The reactive response phase is what teachers do in the immediacy of the challenging behaviour. This is while the child is still in a heightened state emotionally and while the challenging behaviour is still occurring or immediately after challenging behaviour has stopped but while the child is still aroused and in need of careful management to prevent the behaviour reigniting. The hand image in the top right corner of the diagram indicates this is a ‘hands-on phase’. Hands-on in this context is meant to convey the idea that the teacher is acting purposefully and

immediately to the crisis or challenge that is in front of them. This is not a time of contemplation and discussion, it is an active response to the immediacy of the situation at hand. Perhaps the prototypical example of reactive response is physical restraint. The only justification for physical restraint at school is the immediate danger for the child or others if the behaviour were allowed to continue (Ministry of Education, 2017). This is clearly a reactive response, and the restraint would cease as soon as the danger was no longer present.

The proactive phase begins when the child and teacher are calm and no longer in a heightened emotional state, and the focus is now on what can be done so that the challenging behaviour is not repeated and appropriate behaviour is maintained. The eye indicates this is an ‘eyes on’ phase. This is the time for consultation and investigation. It is the time when teachers might reflect and evaluate the reactive strategies they employed in the moment of challenging behaviour. It is also the phase where teachers, with eyes on the child, might become aware that unless there is some proactive intervention then the child’s behaviour could escalate and become challenging. Teachers with “eyes on” are aware of potential triggers and employ many strategies to “head off” challenging behaviour. These are discussed below in the section on proactive responses.

Deciding whether a strategy is reactive or proactive will not always be as apparent as it is for the use of a strategy such as restraint. The following two quotes illustrate the distinction I am drawing here:

Example 1.

We use colouring in. We’ve got some stations set up so that if they need to they just go and sit and colour in. We’ve got a single desk that has got Lego in it if you need to go and sit there and just do some Lego, go and do that.”

(Teacher 2).

In this first example, the teacher was talking about things that they had set up as ways of preventing challenging behaviour occurring. Children who had need of the strategy were allowed to go and colour in or play with Lego if they felt themselves becoming stressed, anxious or heightened. This was a deliberate, proactive, preventive strategy.

Example 2.

I check on him. I say, "I'm coming back, I'm going to check on you." He just has his moment to cool down. He's got things that he can play with. Like he's got, we've talked about having Lego to cool down... (Teacher 10).

In the second example, the teacher was using Lego as a reactive, calming strategy in the immediacy of the child's heightened state and ongoing challenging behaviour.

Reactive Strategies

Reactive strategies for managing challenging behaviour are the actions that teachers take "in the heat of the moment". Table 2 lists the codes used to categorise the reactive strategies teachers described.

Table 2. Reactive strategies

Codes
Provide time and space
Provide comfort and support
Physical intervention
Attend to physical needs
Distract
Name without shame
Individualised response
Move the others
Maintain personal control

As presented in Table 2, most of these actions are directed at the interaction between teacher and child, although *maintain personal control* is about the teacher managing themselves.

In this study, teachers referenced strategies that allow children time to calm down or that support them with physical or emotional comfort. Teachers might walk away to give the child space so as not to add to the feeling of threat that the child might be experiencing.

I walked away thinking, 'I'm just going to leave you for a few minutes...' (Teacher 1).

Teachers explained that they might sit calmly and quietly beside a child to provide emotional support while the child is in an aroused state.

... or just sitting next to them and not saying anything... Just sitting and drinking your coffee while they sit next to you and not asking them how they are (Teacher 7).

They provided physical comfort if that was appropriate for a child who might need a reassuring hug.

And hugs and kisses well that's just our team. That's just how we roll. We have had instances where we've had weighted blankets and that's been part of a programme. That has worked. For me it's just instinctive. If someone's having a rough day I just give them a hug (Teacher 11).

Sometimes teachers physically intervened to prevent a child from continuing with the challenging behaviour.

I stood in between him and the door and ended up giving him a restraint. I held on to him for a couple of seconds, let him go and then he grabbed my dress and was hanging off... (Teacher 13).

Teachers talked about ensuring that other children were safe by moving them out of harm's way. This idea of concern for the safety of others was mentioned by many of the teachers sometimes as a feeling of concern and here in relation to a specific strategy. The strategy of moving others has been included here as a teacher action while the feeling of concern for safety is included in the theme that discusses what teachers think.

He got so worked up that it led to throwing furniture, So I get all the other kids. We stand up and we go out of the room and we sit down in another spot (Teacher 3).

One teacher talked specifically about a strategy of naming the behaviour without attaching any shame to the interaction. This strategy might be part of a quick behaviour, reactive response, proactive response loop. Depending on the level of challenge one is thinking about, this action could also be considered a proactive response in an attempt to address a lower level of behaviour before it escalates into something much more challenging. It has been included here as a reactive response because the strategy directly addresses a behaviour that the teacher wants the child to stop doing.

... "[child's name] you're talking. Please stop." Move on. No big deal. The kids just hear it and don't even blink. They know you've noticed. Yes they were talking. You've named the behaviour. Haven't made a big deal about it (Teacher 8)

Some teachers discussed attending to the physical needs of children.

Go for a drink of water. Have a walk around... Food. Do you need to have something to eat? Into the kitchen you go. Weetbix, something from their lunchbox (Teacher 2).

Others talked about distracting children from their current state of mind.

Sometimes I fake cry. Fake cry. Something random or sometimes I might sing or go crazy and they just look at you like, what the... But it's enough to rejig their brain and kinda stop that pattern (Teacher 11).

Whatever strategy teachers were attempting to employ, many of the participants talked about personalising the response to the individual child. Teachers were aware that a single common response was insufficient and that they would need to use all of their best judgement to decide how to respond to this particular child at this particular moment. Many of the respondents expressed ideas about the need to change tack based on the needs of the individual child.

It depends on the child as well. I think. You know what's too much for one specific child. Like one can be completely different. Like calling out and pushing things might be ok for, well not ok, but you could ignore that behaviour for one child, but for another one you probably wouldn't. I think I have different scales...(Teacher 10).

...actually you pick the one that matches the moment (Teacher 8).

Often we'll take something and adjust it to meet the needs of the child or meet the needs of the studio. That's been good because we can make changes to stuff (Teacher 6).

Teachers were also conscious of the need to manage their own emotions and maintain calmness in front of the children they were trying to help.

I'm trying to teach and trying to improve their behaviour through my reactions and not heighten them more (Teacher 3).

Always make sure that you are as calm as possible so that you are not acting in any way agitated. And whatever they choose, not letting them see that you are affected by it (Teacher 1).

While for teachers, managing their emotions and maintaining personal control of their demeanour is not a specific strategy involving the child directly, it is included here because the teachers talked about maintaining control as a conscious decision they have made about acting in a certain way.

Proactive Strategies

The following table shows the actions that teachers described as taking proactively to prevent challenging behaviour occurring and to help them understand what is happening for children who behave in challenging ways.

Table 3. Proactive strategies

Codes
Positive forecasting Teaching appropriate behaviours Reduce wait time Humour Reason Separate children with challenging behaviour from each other Targeted activities First then Establish expectations Collaborate with the child Choice Peer support Identify underlying problems Monitoring systems

Proactive teacher actions can be described as being positive, directive, collaborative or monitoring.

Positive actions are those that have a positive focus on promoting desired behaviours or engaging positively with children to prevent challenging behaviour occurring. Positive forecasting language encouraged the child and predicted success.

Lots of that positive forecasting. So, “I know we are going to have a great day. I know you are going to be able to do it”. Lots of that, when something’s

not going right for them, “remember when you found gluing in your poem really hard and frustrating the other week and you did it. And I know that you can do this because you were able to do that.” Lots of those, just trying to stay positive (Teacher 3).

So don’t make him the bad guy. Make him the good guy. With this wee boy that just flips around, well actually, I’ll just make you my good guy. And remind you of all the things that are awesome about you and then you’ll fall hopefully into remembering that (Teacher 13).

Teachers used various strategies for teaching pro-social behaviours and self-regulation. Strategies including mindfulness, teaching school values, circle time, controlled breathing, role play, modelling and social skills groups were mentioned.

...during our hui time we always have a focus on one of our RISE values. Or something that we know that we need to work on like just being kind to each other. This week we are doing integrity and being kind (Teacher 2).

For the whole studio we use circle time. So that’s three times a week. We try and keep it positive. We are looking at how to be kind to each other. We do a bit of role play in that. How you would react to somebody if someone was mean to you? We have role plays within our groups and then the children have role plays. So it might be that you model the role play and then they do (Teacher 12).

What do we do? We practice and we love mindfulness at the moment. We do lots of practice. When we are calm and we have strategies and ourselves as teachers all the time model ourselves going through tough times and the kids will be like, it’s OK! Try this or just keep breathing, or do the square breathing. And we’ll do it (Teacher 11).

Other positive strategies included reducing wait time,

Trying to keep them motivated and not having situations where children are waiting too long to do things (Teacher 3)

and using humour to keep the classroom atmosphere upbeat.

Having jokes you know. Like the other day when you came in and we'd read that book about hippopotamus on the roof. All week it's been like, Watch out! Oh no! Here comes a hippopotamus. Sometimes [teacher's] growly Mum voice comes out and my triangle teapot arm comes out and a pointy finger comes out and I say, "Here comes my mother finger." And they just laugh (Teacher 11).

I guess the thing that I think I bring to a team is an element of fun. I like to do a lot of make believe sort of chat and fun having the kids on kind of stuff (Teacher 13).

Directive teacher actions are those where there is an emphasis on teacher control of the situation. Teachers used various strategies to communicate their expectations for how children will behave in class. Expectations are also beliefs that teachers have about the appropriateness or otherwise of a child's behaviour at school. In this subtheme, the focus was on the strategy of establishing the expectations. Later in this chapter, the theme 'Beliefs' discusses what some of the expectations were that teachers had about classroom behaviour.

The start up at the beginning of the year is a strategy for establishing some of those rules for in the studio that's supposed to encourage kind behaviour to others. Setting down the values. I've just done a rotation of Values expectations that we have in the studio (Teacher 4).

Sometimes teachers planned specific activities designed to calm and engage children or activities that met the child's needs in some particular way. These might have been activities that are low demand or repetitive to facilitate children's confidence. From a

SDT perspective these are activities designed to promote the child's sense of competence.

We've got the trolley at the beginning of the day. So those children who come in disregulated get to go into that room and have a lovely start to the morning and then they come join us. That's working so so well (Teacher 2).

Monday mashup came about because we were having horrible Monday's every day. It is about challenging behaviours. So every Monday last year by the end of the day everyone in the team would be absolutely exhausted and miserable. It's not a nice way to start the week. I suggested, "why don't we have fun on a Monday morning so the kids are happy to come in?" (Teacher 12).

Teachers tried to reason with children to help them understand why there were particular expectations.

Once everything had calmed down I explained to him why this was not ok.

This is not how we act at school (Teacher 5).

So they don't just go, "we're not allowed to because they said", or, "it's this because they said". We try and get them to think about, "why do you think it is like that?" Then they take it on board more I feel. If they've thought of it themselves rather than, "oh the teacher said we're not allowed to so we're not allowed to" (Teacher 9).

These comments match the CPS Plan B step of defining adult concerns and seek to provide justifiable explanations for teacher expectations rather than demanding blind obedience because of teacher status. Sometimes teachers can expect compliance with their instructions without always explaining to children why compliance is required. The comments above indicate teachers in this study attempted to ensure students understood the reasons for requests for compliant behaviour.

Teachers sometimes used an instructional format known as “First Then”. First [do this] then you get to do [some other preferred activity].

We use the First and then. First you need to come and do this work then you can go on that. That seems to work with [child] for example. He really responds to that (Teacher 2).

Lots of those first and then. First you’re doing your reading then we’re going to play. First you can do this then we’re going to be getting blocks out. So that there’s always something, they don’t think this is going to last forever, the hard part (Teacher 3).

Teachers separated children with challenging behaviour so as to minimise their interactions with each other in the classroom.

...maybe separate them a little bit from each other and help them have a good experience so that they have a good day (Teacher 2).

We noticed this time that actually a lot of our year 4 boys who are quite challenging were drawn to the coding because it was all computers. So we just talked to them and said, “look, is this going to work with you guys all together? Or is there somewhere else you would be happy going?” Then we just swapped them over. That worked really well doing that. But they were involved in the process. It wasn’t just, “you can’t do it so you’ll have to go somewhere else.” It was very much, “we’re looking at this group and actually you guys struggle a bit together” (Teacher 12).

At times teachers used collaborative strategies that sought input from the child and that took account of the children’s ideas and opinions.

Like getting the children to come up with the solution because if they come up with the solution they’re more likely to want to work at it (Teacher 9).

It was really interesting to see what they came up with. ...Made them start thinking about what they might need to do. How would you actually make them [rules] and enforce them? How would you put them into place so that everyone's following them (Teacher 4).

Teachers offered choice to students in the hope that their motivation and engagement is enhanced by having chosen some aspect of the activity.

We do our discovery time in the afternoon where it's full of choice and we listen to their voice as well, "What would you like to do? Yes we can make that work for you." We try and cater to interests as well. Throughout the week that's what we try to do to try and mix it up a little bit. So it's not all, "you've got to do this." Actually no! It's your choice what you do right at this moment (Teacher 2).

Students might be partnered with other children for activities or to have positive role models to work with.

Sometimes they have their buddies to act as their conscience. I might buddy them up especially if they are a lower level kid who might find it difficult to self regulate. I might just buddy them up with someone who can have a word with them if they feel that their behaviour is showing those sorts of things. This is your buddy and they might just give you a reminder if you're doing something like shouting out or...(Teacher 4).

And we've got buddy classes too. So [teacher] and I have buddied our kids up. Within there the behaviours are linked, maybe good role models that can support... It's just once a fortnight. They are doing some writing together at the moment. The ones that come to us are blogging with their buddy, and then they'll swap. That is for writing and bit of fun along the way. Having a wee buddy to hang out with (Teacher 12).

It is common for teachers to have systems that monitor children's behaviour throughout the day. The purpose of these systems is to provide feedback to the student and to encourage them to engage in appropriate behaviours.

As a team we have tick charts. We check in with each of the children that are usually struggling during the day, to see if they are on the right track for the day. We do it at break times or after every break we check in with them (Teacher 5).

Other monitoring tools are used to identify underlying problems.

We fill out one of those tick charts like, are they very likely, unlikely to do that. ...we've done Whakatata House and I think we've done ...Health Board ones. Sort of about mental things. When we did the RTLB referral for this behaviour for this next level down group. [RTLB] we filled in like an assessment, it was just based on our feelings about what happens here. Do they do this? Do they do this? So that was sort of like pre-data. But again that's just from our gut feeling from what we see in the classroom. Or they might say, do they follow teacher's instructions? Never. All the time. With a sliding scale. We just have to tick on that. The more formal assessments come from outside of school (Teacher 11).

All of these proactive strategies share the goal of preventing challenging behaviour occurring or reducing the frequency of repeated challenging behaviour.

Searching For Help

Table 4 lists the actions that teachers take specifically to learn ways of helping children with challenging behaviour or to communicate with others and ask for help.

Table 4. Help

Codes
Professional development
Searching for strategies that work
Communicate with outside agencies or experts
Communicate with school colleagues
Communicate with family

Potentially this subtheme could have been collapsed inside the previous two subthemes of reactive and proactive responses to challenging behaviour. A request for help often happens as a reactive response in the heat of the moment of challenging behaviour. It may also happen proactively with the aim of gathering ideas and strategies in a preventive manner. The reason for keeping the subtheme “Help” separate is that there seemed to be similarities in the codes that point at the teacher’s search for understanding, assistance, or suggestions for strategies to try, rather than the help being a strategy in itself. While asking for help is still an action and sits under the *Action* theme, as a subtheme, it has an emphasis on learning about what might work for a child or about communicating with others regarding the challenging behaviour.

From my observation of classrooms over the years, in the moment of behavioural challenge, it is common for teachers to seek reactive help, first from their teaching colleagues and team leader and less frequently from the SENCO, Deputy Principals or Principal. Other help responses might be either proactive or reactive depending on the state of the child. Calling the SENCO for help while a child is in the midst of an emotional outburst is reactive. Meeting with the SENCO after school to get advice on what to try tomorrow is proactive. Mostly the help received from agencies outside of the school is proactive. The RTLB, SWIS, Psychologist, Counsellor, and others very rarely interact with a child in a heightened state. Professional development is clearly proactive help. No one is saying to the child throwing furniture, “Hold there for just a second while I go and attend a course on teaching anger management skills”.

The first two codes, *professional development* and *searching for strategies that work*, have been separated because although both are about gaining new ideas, the comments coded *professional development* are just descriptive of the learning

experiences that the teachers undertook. Teachers talked about professional readings, blogs, facebook groups, university papers, conferences, and staff meetings. Courses that teachers had attended included, restorative practice training, understanding trauma, dyslexia, alpha children, aggression, mindfulness, PB4L, and incredible years.

I did a course that was through the cluster that was about emotion coaching. That was awesome. That was lots of hooking in to the children, about how they are feeling and helping them work through situations and so they feel they are listened to and understood and not trying to distract them too early from their feelings. I did that with Gordon Neufield. With [counsellor] I did two of her ones. One on alpha children and another on aggression (Teacher 3).

I did an online mindfulness course which I did for me and for the children. I found that really helpful. I've done [counsellor] anxiety and aggression courses after school. That was really good. ULearn I went on a workshop that look at motivating boys. I did the same at TeachEd summit. With a special focus on Māori students (Teacher 6).

The comments coded *searching for strategies that work* refer to the teacher's hope or desire to find strategies that were going to be effective in reducing challenging behaviour.

We just have to find the solution to guide them in the right way. Obviously with these courses that I've been on they tell you what might work and what might not (Teacher 5).

That's the things you keep searching for. That thing that's going to give... it could have blown up in my face. I didn't know what was going to happen. If

he'd go there and think, No I hate this. I'm gone. Or it would work.

Fortunately it worked.... I'm going to repeat that but again you don't know if it's going to continue to work, but I can only keep trying (Teacher 6).

She had bundles of tips and tricks and ideas and things that she could give you that would work. It wasn't a talk it was actually physical, here try this. I've got this neat resource. Give it a go. This strategy works really well, Try that out (Teacher 4).

Teachers also mentioned a number of experts who they had heard speak, read their material or attended courses with. This willingness to gain professional knowledge signals teachers' dedication to learning better ways of managing challenging behaviour. Alongside general professional development, teachers also sought support for managing specific children from outside agencies and experts outside of the school staff. Examples of people or agencies include; RTLB, RTM, SWIS, MoE specialists, counsellor, Mana Ake support workers, youth workers and psychologists.

Yeah so we've used them. So [RTM] RTLB and [MoE specialist support] and then RTLB referrals. We're with the Ministry as well. [MoE specialist] used to come (Teacher 7).

I guess if it was a concern that we felt we were unable to deal with that we could make a referral to RTLB (Teacher 8).

Within school, teachers communicate with colleagues to offer or solicit emotional or practical support, to celebrate success or to gather information. Often the first support that teachers seek is from their immediate teaching team colleagues and the teacher aides who work in their classroom. A second level of support is available from the SENCO and school senior leaders.

And see I've got a great team so I'm lucky as. You can just go. I am having a rough day tag me out. And they'll be like, sweet and someone just always comes in and fills your space. Or I just need to go and have a talk to myself in the toilet. Ok. Like... A few minutes out. We've got a great team like that (Teacher 11).

In our team we are always asking for support from colleagues. Either where it is spur of the moment like, "Oh, can you please take these children? I need to be with him", or a tag team like, "actually I've been hurt and I feel heightened, so can you deal with him because you'll be better at it because I'm feeling heightened or stressed, upset now" (Teacher 3).

...just to get the insight of... just more information about the child as well. So just talking with the different staff about them (Teacher 11).

Teachers also communicate with families to ensure that parents know what is happening at school, to solicit parent support for strategies and to gather information to assist with understanding what is happening for the child.

And communicating with parents because ninety percent of the time the parents thank you for talking to them, or opening up doors. Talking to the parents, talking to the children and letting the parents know what's going well, what isn't and then parents know what's available for them. ... Sometimes it's the parent and child but often it's the parent talking to you on the side or the parent talking to you on the phone. ...It's that communication so that the child can see too, that the parent and us are working together to help them. Not just us against them but working together (Teacher 6).

I think having a lot of communication with families and outside agencies can bring the whole picture together (Teacher 1).

Overall, the results show that teachers use reactive strategies in the moment of challenging behaviour to maintain control and ensure the safety of others. The reactive strategies described in this section are largely positive in nature. Teachers will, of course, present the best image of themselves and so may have chosen to not talk about punitive or negative strategies that they employ to maintain control. Data for this study were gathered from teacher responses to interview questions, not from classroom observations. The themes and codes developed from the data are representative of teacher's perspectives of themselves. Teachers in this study all teach in open-plan classrooms with five or six other adults present in the space. Potentially the presence of other adults may cause the teachers to modify their responses to less punitive or negative strategies than they might use in situations where they are the only adult present. Proactive strategies seek to reduce the frequency or intensity of challenging behaviour. Some of the strategies focus on collaboration with the child and rely on positive relationships. Other strategies are directive or based on behaviourist principals of reward and consequence. Teachers seek help when the strategies they are employing no longer seem effective at addressing their concerns about challenging behaviour. If the help teachers receive does not facilitate the change they desire, then teachers are left in a difficult position. They can continue attempting to manage challenging behaviour with the tools and strategies they have or they must seek out new tools. Either option requires a considerable amount of energy and involves significant stress on teachers.

What Teachers Think

Teachers in this study described how they think and feel about challenging behaviour. Based on participant commentaries, teachers' thoughts were organised

across three related themes: beliefs, feelings, and perceived causes of challenging behaviour.

Beliefs

The examples and codes presented under the theme of beliefs express ideas that teachers hold to be true about children and appropriate responses to challenging behaviour.

Table 5. Beliefs

Codes
Fix it
Motivation strategies
Beliefs about learning activities
Consistency
Relationships are important
1:1 support
Expectations
Understand trigger

In some instances, teachers might express questions about their beliefs and in other cases the belief may not be obvious or articulated at all but is nevertheless implicit in the way teachers have described aspects of their interactions with children. For some of the codes categorised under this theme, there is a close relationship between the belief and the action the teachers take based on that belief. An example of this interwoven relationship between action and belief is visible in the following quote.

We have a check-in sheet. They come in from their break and, “How was break? How’s this morning gone?” They’ve got a tick sheet. They get so many ticks at the end of the day they get a reward. Something out of the goody box or something else they might want. 5 minutes free time or something like that (Teacher 2).

This could have been coded under the subtheme *Monitoring Systems* in the *Action* theme. Clearly, there is teacher action at play. I have coded it as a belief about motivation because it seems to me that the comment hints at a belief or assumption that the child will be motivated by the ticks and rewards. Other examples of this close relationship between belief and action are discussed below with the coded examples.

Teachers believe that physical damage or harmed relationships need to be repaired.

You've done something wrong. You need to fix it. We're still here for you.

We'll go with you but you need to fix this now. We use a lot of talk in our class about, "we are whanau. We are all together and we work together. Things happen that we need to fix them but essentially we are all here together and we support each other, so you need to... Like a family you need to respect the relationships in our room"(Teacher 7).

... and how can we make things right. Like it's ok to be mad. It's ok to have these moments but how can we fix it after. I'm still teaching but I go in and check on him every five minutes just to say, "hey I'm here are you ready to talk yet?" and he'll say no or yes and then I'll go back. So I do that a few times and then by after say fifteen minutes I go and say, "are you ok? Do you want to talk about it?" And he'll sort of nod and we'll sit down and have a talk about it and then we talk about how to make it right and then he'll normally just fix the furniture and whatever he's done (Teacher 10).

Teachers believe that praise, rewards and consequences motivate children to engage in desired behaviours. The code *Motivation Strategies* has been included under the subtheme *Beliefs* rather than under the *Action* theme and subtheme *Proactive Strategies*. This is another example of the interwoven aspect of beliefs contributing to actions. While many of the teacher comments coded *Motivation*

Strategies could also be considered actions they have been coded here has beliefs because the belief that this is an appropriate action to take seems to have as much significance here as the action itself.

Just the praising all the time. So praising the good, even the tiniest little thing, praise them. The four to one praising with them (Teacher 10).

I write children's names on the board as much as I can or somewhere, a piece of paper and I say that if you get three ticks after your name you get a prize or some sort of reward just because it will encourage them to continue that behaviour (Teacher 5).

I am actually currently using a sticker chart. It's, I suppose it is a behaviour. [child] got a bit of an attachment to Mum. She can really grab on to Mum and not let Mum leave the studio. Pull on her clothes and all that. So I've got a sticker chart up above my desk. Every morning if she lets Mum freely walk out of the studio and say goodbye. She gets to choose a sticker to put on the sticker chart. If she gets all five stickers for the week Mum takes her to QE2 in the weekend (Teacher 9).

I think we do have a consequence for some sort of behaviours. It might be that you give up part of your break to stay in behind if you've done something...(Teacher 4).

Most of these strategies seem to focus on some form of reward or consequence and could be described as originating from a behaviourist philosophy.

Teachers have various beliefs about learning activities. Examples include; that learning should be engaging, and that choice of activity is motivating.

They're choosing what they are doing, so they are really excited about that.

Hopefully the behaviour is managed better (Teacher 12).

Try to provide engaging activities so then that is probably one that is quite good. Make it exciting. If I were to introduce an activity, make it exciting for me. Show the children how excited I am about this. Then try and display that to them and hopefully they'll take on that wanting to do it (Teacher 5).

Some of the comments related to this code indicated the teachers' belief that increasing children's autonomy was beneficial for increasing motivation.

Teachers believe that their responses to challenging behaviour and their expectations need to be consistent.

You are just re-evaluating. And actually we haven't been able to be consistent so I think we need to drop that one, because it doesn't work if it's not consistent (Teacher 4).

Just using strategies that are similar probably would help in regards to consistency (Teacher 5).

Teachers believe that developing strong positive relationships with children is important for successful management of children with challenging behaviour. This belief also includes the idea that teachers can connect with students if they can find out children's interests and relate to them around things the student finds captivating.

They can go to someone outside of the classroom but really it's connecting with the person in the studio that's with them. Whether it's any one of the four of us or teacher aides. It's having that person there they can connect with and they can see them and go finger up or go [Thumb up] Just little things. It's making that connection within the studio rather than with someone else outside is the strength in that I think (Teacher 6).

It's not the act of getting the information it's showing an interest in the child to make that connection with them. Sometimes it's just not about the

information, it's just letting them know that you care about them. So they've got somebody in their life (Teacher 4).

I think relationships with those children are so important and if you don't have the relationship you're not going to be able to redirect them or use your relationship to help bring them back, or help them, or they're not going to tell you what the problem is, cause they don't trust you or think that... Yeah. I think that the relationship, I suppose that's the essence, if they don't like you or think you are on their side. Especially our kids. If they don't think you are on their side...(Teacher 7).

I build all of my, or a lot of my working with kids on working those relationships that I have with them. Remembering two years ago when we did this or whatever. That actually all kids want to be liked and you've just got to figure out what the key is. I've always had that belief. There is something with every kid. There'll be something that is the in and that you can then work with that kid. (Teacher 13).

This belief in the importance of relationships was repeated in many of the comments teachers made. Two perspectives are evident in these comments. Firstly, some of the comments hint at the desire for control being the reason that teachers hope that high-quality relationships will be effective in winning compliance from the children.

Although this might seem a manipulative explanation, teachers also showed their compassion for children, their desire to understand them and their hope that they could form mutually respectful relationships. Some of the feelings of frustration and failure expressed by teachers in the *Feelings* theme seemed to be linked to a sense of disappointment that teachers felt when the strong relationships they had worked so hard to develop were not reciprocated. The SDT need for relatedness is especially

evident in these comments about the importance of relationships and also in the following code of 1:1 support.

Teachers believe that children need 1:1 support.

Some of them just want some 1:1 time with you so we try and release teachers to do that. We see that they need and we've talked about that in our team meetings. If you know that that child needs you for this particular thing you just need to make sure that we know that that's what is needed ...(Teacher 2).

I know you'd be fine if you had one on one teacher aide, that was teaching all those social skills, like turn taking and dealing with the word no (Teacher 11).

Cause they actually need one on one. ... It's a hard one because we just can't go, "Oh ok I want to spend the next 15 minutes with you"... (Teacher 6).

Some of the frustration expressed by teachers was linked to this belief.

Teachers thought that if they only had enough time to work 1:1 with the child that the child would get the attention they desired and the relationship that was so valuable to teachers would have sufficient time to develop. While closely related to the belief in strong positive relationships 1:1 support is separately coded because of the specific nature of the belief.

Teachers have various specific expectations of children in relation to their behaviour in class. Examples include; that work must be completed, that reasonable requests should be complied with, that children will join in with learning tasks, that children must listen when teachers talk to them, and that children will behave in an orderly manner.

Actually you are still going to have to do it (Teacher 6).

You were told to put the iPad away. It's not an unreasonable request (Teacher 11).

You have to be sitting on the mat at the same time as everybody else, if that's what we are going to work on (Teacher 4).

One of the wee boys who is meant to be in my group wasn't joining us on the mat but he was just doing his own thing at the back (Teacher 3).

I had to actually make him stand still. He was still trying to ignore me and walk out. "No just stay still, look at me. I'm talking to you." That's being such a dictator but we've tried lots of other ways, so I'm going to try, right stand and look and talk (Teacher 4).

Teachers also hold the expectation that they ought to be allowed to teach and that challenging behaviour or non-compliance is an interruption to the teacher's core task.

We've got refusing to work. That's a challenging behaviour because you are there to teach and they are refusing to attend your group or your lesson (Teacher 4).

...being non-compliant, is a big big one I find. The non-compliance and just not listening to teachers. Also, not being in the right space at the right time.

Having to convince a child to be where you need them to be at that particular three minute session that you are having with them (Teacher 5).

It is the inability to meet the expectation that sets the adult and child in conflict.

Without the expectation, there would be no conflict and if the expectation were met by the child there would be no conflict. Understanding children's response to adult expectations is a key component of the CPS approach.

The final code in this group, *Understand Trigger* has been included under the subtheme *Belief* rather than adding it to the subtheme *Theories About Cause*. This is because the comments coded *Understand Trigger* were indicating that teachers expressed a desire to understand what the trigger for the challenging behaviour was

with the belief that they would better be able to help the child fix the problems or change the behaviour. Triggers were experiences immediately before the challenging behaviour occurred that could directly explain the child's reaction. Ideas coded under the subtheme *Theories About Cause* represent teacher theories about the underlying causes of children's challenging behaviour rather than the immediate trigger. These theories about cause might include circumstances at home or some other factor that has contributed to the child being emotionally or socially challenged but is not immediately linked as the event that has triggered the child's response.

The most challenging thing is.... not knowing what set them off (Teacher 2).

What can we do and what's triggering it? That trigger is often the thing that we miss. Seeing what's triggering that behaviour. If you find what the trigger is you can do more preventatives (Teacher 6).

Theories About Cause of Challenging Behaviour

This subtheme represents teachers' desires to understand what is going on for children, and their causal attributions of challenging behaviour. For instance, Teacher 3 explained: *"It was just us really trying to work out what's going on."* Table 6 lists codes that expressed various ideas about causality. In most cases, the implicit intent was understanding rather than blame.

Table 6. Theories about cause

Codes
Home is the problem
Learning difficulties are the problem
Attention seeking
Unmet physical need
Anxiety
Class size
Poor social skills
Lack of motivation
Fairness
Undiagnosed condition

This subtheme is not about the immediate trigger for a particular incident, but the wider factors that contribute to an ongoing pattern of challenging behaviour. Calling these ideas theories does not imply that they are not genuine reasons for challenging behaviours, but in many examples, teachers use language that indicates this is their perception or educated guess rather than being directly observable or something that the child has declared.

Teachers theorised that whatever is happening at home is the underlying cause of challenging behaviour.

You try really hard but actually, some kids. We can do our best but some things I'm not sure how much we can make a difference to but we can just try and make the difference at school. We can't do anything about home, and that's the sad thing (Teacher 12).

I think what I find most difficult is giving my all and trying every strategy I can, making small changes and then knowing that when they go home at night, nothing is going to be reinforced or changed. We're going to have to start again on Monday. Or the next day. It's not. When you haven't got home on the same page, sometimes it feels like you are fighting a battle (Teacher 8).

The attribution of home circumstances as being the underlying cause of challenging behaviour is an assumption that teachers have limited ability to respond to. In extreme cases, where teachers suspect abuse, neglect, or a significant risk of harm, teachers might refer families to the Police or to Oranga Tamariki (OT). In less serious cases, teachers are able to suggest resources that families may wish to connect with. These might include, for example, counselling, social workers, parenting courses or support materials. Some of these resources are easily accessed by families through the school while other resources are more difficult for families to connect with. The role of the

teacher is one of raising awareness of the support resources available to families or raising concerns for investigation by other government agencies.

Teachers theorised that the underlying cause of challenging behaviour is difficulty with learning.

They have quite noticeable tendencies towards things like dyslexia and learning disabilities. The challenges people face when having those difficulties sometimes arise in the children that we struggle with in the classroom that are showing the misbehaviours in the classroom (Teacher 5).

There were problems. His behaviour was really challenging, but the minute we found out, from an outside agency, that his processing was so slow, that turned everything around for him, because we knew, Oh! Ok we just do this then this and he will then do what we need him to do (Teacher 1).

Difficulty with learning as an attribution for challenging behaviour is an example of the SDT need for competence being an underlying cause. SDT would argue that the child has decreased motivation to attempt the expected task because they are unable to perform that task competently. This belief that there may be some learning difficulty is linked to proactive requests for help from experts. Teachers want an assessment for dyslexia, for example, because if that proves to be an issue for the child it not only provides the teacher with a reason but also an avenue for accessing effective support.

Teachers theorise that challenging behaviour is caused by the child wanting 1:1 attention. This is another example of a coding decision that is drawing a distinction between an idea that could be considered a belief and one that has, in this case, been included as a theory about the cause. Where ideas about 1:1 support have been coded as a belief, teachers are expressing their view that the provision of 1:1 support will prevent challenging behaviour and that this is a desirable strategy to

provide. Comments here indicate that teachers were explaining the challenging behaviour as having occurred because the child was not getting the attention they wanted.

So it was one of the afternoons and she was screaming that she had a sore ankle. She was, what I would call crocodile tears. She was kicking and banging on things. Obviously wanted one on one attention and she wasn't getting it (Teacher 9).

Because a lot of the time how I deal with those kind of behaviours, I do try and ignore because that's what they want from me. They want my attention. (Teacher 10).

A desire for 1:1 attention is a theory of causality for challenging behaviour that is difficult to prove. Children are unlikely to express this desire directly as a request for more individual time with the teacher. This code links to both the SDT need for relatedness and seems to be an expression of the teacher's belief in the importance of high-quality relationships. The teachers seemed to be saying, "if only I could give this child more individual attention then I would be able to meet the needs that I am currently not able to meet because my time is required by others". It is also debatable whether a desire for attention is something that the child has any control over. Certainly some children have developed more socially acceptable ways of communicating this need. A CPS approach might argue that the child who is unable to appropriately communicate their need for attention has a lagging skill that needs further development.

Teachers theorised that challenging behaviour is caused by some unmet physical need.

I guess a lot of it is you see the end result. Don't you. So I guess it's just thinking back, trying to get back to the beginning. The cause of the result.

Often some of these children you just see the yelling out but it's really trying to get back to find out what's caused that in the first place. Is it that they came to school and didn't have any breakfast? (Teacher 12).

Unmet physical needs such as thirst, hunger and sleep are also mentioned in the subtheme *Reactive Strategies*. The difference in coding these responses was because in the comments coded here the focus seemed to be on the theorising about causes rather than meeting an evident need that was the focus of the reactive response to physical needs.

Teachers theorise that anxiety or fear of shame is the underlying cause of challenging behaviour.

The anxiety that children suffer about being at school. It's the whole thing is they refuse to work. They are afraid to fail. They're afraid to get it wrong. They're afraid to look silly in front of their peers. They don't want to be shamed because they can't do it. So rather than doing it they'll throw a tantrum or avoid or say no. So you can't look silly if you don't do it. In their heads they feel like they'll look better because they are clowning around and they think the children are going to laugh at them. That's safe. Not doing it is safe (Teacher 6).

Where's this come from? She said, it's out of the blue. He didn't do any of this at his Kindy. He's arrived here and the only thing we can think of is school anxiety (Teacher 13).

Attribution of challenging behaviour to anxiety is another example of causality that is difficult to prove without knowing what the child is thinking. Greene would argue that to access whether this is really the cause of the challenging behaviour one would have to hear it from the child by listening carefully to their answer to the question, "What's up?"

Teachers theorised that a contributing factor for challenging behaviour is the size of the classroom and the number of children in the class.

He's struggling to be in the large environment (Teacher 6).

And I think it is exacerbated by the fact that you've got so many kids in one space. Before you could split them. So you might have a couple but then suddenly you've got eight who other children see and... because eight is a core group isn't it. When you've got one or two the other just look at them and think, oh yeah. Whereas when there's eight, or nine, or ten, other kids then see some of that behaviour and think I might try that (Teacher 12).

Class size and the large multi-teacher environments are outside the control of teachers and children. If they believe this to be a factor in causing challenging behaviour, teachers might attempt to modify the environment through various means. They might configure the physical space with furniture to create smaller spaces in an attempt to contain children or reduce the distractions of the more open environment. Teachers reported reducing the size of the group they were working with to allow for greater attention and to separate children with challenging behaviour from others who might trigger their behaviour. Children also employ strategies that help them manage the effect of the large classroom environment. Sometimes children will sit under desks, hide in corners or create cubby spaces. Some of the classrooms in this study have specific teacher sanctioned spaces designed for children to withdraw from the large environment. In other cases, children will create these spaces themselves as they feel the need.

Teachers theorise that the underlying cause of challenging behaviour is related to children's poor social skills.

One of the things is that they have difficulty socialising. So when they've been playing outside, they've got into fights, they've got into arguments and they

can't leave it at the door, or it hasn't been resolved and they'll come in fighting. It can go as far as throwing things at each other or hitting each other or swearing at each other. Again it's a small group and it tends to be boys. With those boys they can't... whatever's happened outside comes inside with them and then that's all that's in their brain and that's all that's in their head and they can't get past that (Teacher 6).

Teachers theorise that challenging behaviour is caused by the child's lack of interest or motivation towards the learning activities.

The challenge is they just don't want to work. They have no interest. It's not instant gratification so they are not getting something straight back to them. So if it doesn't come easy to them they just avoid it or don't want to do it. Or they down tools. Or they can go to the toilet a lot and hide (Teacher 6).

Teachers theorise that challenging behaviour is caused by the child's sense of fairness.

...like with that child that obviously has a frustration with things that are fair and unfair we know that that's an issue for him... (Teacher 5).

Something they perceive is not fair has happened in a game or at school or in learning. That has made them unhappy with the situation. It is usually fairness. I think he got that and I didn't so that's not fair. Or, she's sitting there and I should be sitting there that's not fair (Teacher 7).

The previous examples of poor social skills, lack of interest and sense of fairness are all examples of teachers attempting to make sense of what is happening and explain the cause of challenging behaviour. CPS would urge the teachers to ask the child so that, rather than guessing what the problem is, the real causes can be identified. This is not to suggest that the teacher's theory of cause is incorrect but to raise the possibility that it may be an incorrect or incomplete interpretation of the

child's motivation. Once the correct problem has been identified the focus can be on teaching the lagging skills.

Teachers theorise that some undiagnosed condition is the underlying cause of challenging behaviour.

We have a lovely wee guy that you've met before who I'm sure has got ODD.

I'm not a trained psychologist but in my years of teaching this is one that

stands outside of the box. We have total meltdowns about things that you can't

seem to realise what the antecedent was (Teacher 11).

This code is another example of the close relationship between teachers' ideas and their actions. Expressed here as a theory of cause it is an attempt to make sense of the challenging behaviour. This theorising might then lead to referring the child to an RTLB, Psychologist, or other professionals for an assessment. As already mentioned, the difficulty accessing these Tier Two or Tier Three supports may mean that teachers are left guessing about appropriate assistance for children. While a specific diagnosis may be helpful for understanding children it may not always open up any more significant support for teachers than is already available through RTLB or other school resources. The ALSUP assessment may help teachers understand the specific unsolved problems and lagging skills a child is experiencing. This might fill a gap by providing teachers with a useful assessment tool they can implement themselves without having to wait for an "official" diagnosis.

Feelings

Feelings and emotions are significant factors influencing the teacher's actions. The codes and examples listed in Table 7 demonstrate concerns that teachers have for others and their own frustrations, fears and hopes for things to be different.

Table 7. Feelings

Codes
Concern about safety
Concern about learning
Failure
Frustration
Things are getting worse
Hard work
Success
Empathy

Teachers express their concern for the physical and emotional safety of children in their care.

And when other children are at risk. I find that challenging if we're having to go into break out rooms or get out of spaces when things are being thrown or, just when other children that I am in charge of their safety at kura. I can't guarantee that. Sometimes if children are kicking off then that makes me very anxious I think, more than anything cause I know I have to keep them safe, but I don't know how (Teacher 7).

The types of behaviours that I find the most challenging are those where other children feel intimidated or not safe (Teacher 8).

I suppose anything where the safety of the other children in the class is jeopardized or even how the children are feeling. So anything that upsets or makes the other children in the class feel scared or nervous would be something that worries me (Teacher 3).

Teachers express their concerns about the impact challenging behaviour has on the learning of other children and of the child with challenging behaviour.

The big turmoil I have is over the needs of the few to the needs of the many.

We want to do everything we can for children who are having difficulty with

their behaviour and sometimes I worry that the needs of other children might not be being met. ... The more time we are putting trying to make it work for individual children then the less time you can put in to the other children.

Where is the balance? (Teacher 3).

At another level behaviours that I find challenging are when students are disengaged and take down other students learning or disempower the other learners by distracting, calling them onside (Teacher 8).

I think the behaviour I find most challenging day to day is the behaviour that stops the learning for others (Teacher 7).

The expressions of concern for physical safety and learning were mentioned by almost every teacher in this study. These feelings were also often linked to the following code when teachers felt they had failed because they had not been able to keep children safe or ensure that learning was happening.

Teachers feel that they are failing children or not doing their job properly. Included in this code are feelings of shame or the sense of being judged and found wanting.

Some days it makes me feel useless (Teacher 11).

...it sort of makes me feel like I'm not doing my job properly because I've got no ideas to give them (Teacher 2).

I suppose there's all those feelings of useless and inadequate. Those feelings of horribleness (Teacher 3).

Teachers express frustration over a variety of different challenges. Examples include not having enough time to support children, disruptions to learning, strategies that do not work, expectations not being met, not knowing where to access help and feeling powerless in the situation. The desire to be allowed to teach is included here because when teachers talked about just wanting to be allowed to teach,

it was in the context of frustration that the challenging behaviour was stopping them doing their job.

Frustrated. There's no way around it for me. I find it really difficult that I don't have the time to spend with these children (Teacher 6).

I'd got to the point where I thought, "This isn't good". I was just getting really frustrated (Teacher 12).

I guess the powerless feeling that I don't enjoy at all. It's not often that I feel powerless in my life. I don't really enjoy that feeling (Teacher 13).

I feel really frustrated when they are refusing to do it and they just absolutely outright refuse. No matter what you seem to talk to them about or try to offer them. It's like, Nah!. I find that really challenging and frustrating. Really really frustrating (Teacher 9).

Whereas you are actually in the middle of doing something and it's sometimes I get a wee bit resentful of that. Well actually I'm with these kids here and you can wait... You can see my eyes are pricking at the tears here. You just think, Far out! Are you kidding me? (Teacher 11).

Teachers express the sense that behaviour is becoming more challenging than it used to be in the past. This sense that things are getting worse was sometimes connected directly to specific explanations or theories about causes of challenging behaviour, at other times it seemed to be the teacher expressing frustration that “things are worse” and they have no explanation for why that might be.

Some children in the past had more trouble regulating themselves or more trouble with their behaviour in the playground, but could hold it together in the class. Now it seems to be more consistent for me in both settings... My go to things don't work anymore. They used to work with the most tricky, but now our most trickies are a bit trickier. (Teacher 3).

But I think the hardest one for me is the student I can't reach at all. I've been teaching over 35 years ... There's very few people that I couldn't reach. I feel today there's more children we can't reach. I think that's growing. For me that's the hard thing. Even five years ago I would have said I don't think there has been a child I haven't been able to reach, But that's not the same now (Teacher 6).

It's definitely come to an extreme level. You know, this is probably the worst, well the worst that I have ever seen in my teaching career (Teacher 2).

One of the encouragements of the CPS approach is to use tools such as the ALSUP to gather specific accurate data on unsolved problems and lagging skills rather than floundering with speculation and theorising.

Teachers express feelings of tiredness, stress, exhaustion and the amount of energy that is required to do their job. Some teachers also expressed ideas about the impact that their being stressed has on their family.

Until you've worked in one of those spaces you actually don't realise how tiring it is. It's just constant. Hard going (Teacher 12).

When it's all day or a lot of times in a week it's really tiring, mentally draining. I feel... Like I go home and I'm really really tired. I find it hard to be as patient with my own child, cause I feel my patience has all been used up and my calm manner has all been used up and my Oh! This is going to be ok has all gone and then I get home and I'm like.. Oh No! [laugh] Yeah. That's probably challenging for my son, Or my husband. Cause some days if I've had a... Yeah. I don't want to talk to anyone. I don't want to ask you to do the dishes twice. You know stuff like that. Which are little things but. I have less patience for others cause I feel my... I feel, I hope I am. I'm quite calm in the

classroom. With the behaviours, but I think when I get home I've just used it all. It's gone (Teacher 7).

So it's exhausting. That is probably the other effect that it has on all of us. You are always at the point of exhaustion (Teacher 2).

It wears you out. In my classroom, that's my strength and I am really good at fighting for the underdog. I always have been. Sometimes fighting for that underdog takes a lot of energy (Teacher 11).

Teacher stress is a significant challenge that the profession needs to deal with. This study shows how hard teachers are working and how much energy, thought and compassion they invest in attempting to help children with challenging behaviour develop socially appropriate behaviour. These responses showed that the belief teachers have in the importance of high-quality relationships with students is not accomplished without significant personal cost and stress.

Teachers recognise and celebrate the times when they do experience success with children.

And maybe that's what we need to do more often, is going in with these challenging kids and saying to teachers, Hey, yeah I get he's still, or she's still really hard but last time I was here, you know, he did that twelve times, he's done it five. Like that's amazing! Well done you (Teacher 1).

Yesterday at the end of the day we just said, what a fantastic day we've had (Teacher 2).

Some days if you have a wee breakthrough that makes you feel good (Teacher 11).

Because the focus of this study was on challenging behaviour, there were only a few references to success. Partly this could be explained by the fact that teachers pay little

attention to the things that are working for them. It is when things are not working that teachers invest energy and time into trying to understand the situation.

Teachers express sadness and empathy for children.

Some of them I do feel empathy for them depending on what's happened and how they are reacting to it. But I'm like ok I do actually have sympathy for you and I can understand why you've reacted that way...(Teacher 9).

Yep and he's always very remorseful. He's always wanting to please. That's when my empathy comes in and that's when I start to feel quite sad for him (Teacher 10).

These emotions show teachers' connection to children and reinforce the views about the importance of relationships expressed earlier in the results. One challenge that teachers will have to manage is that these feelings may add to their stress and burn out because they care so much.

SDT helps us understand how all of these feelings contribute to the teacher's motivation. Feelings of concern about safety or learning could be related to the teacher's sense of autonomy or the level of control they have about the situation. Many of the feelings are linked to the teacher's need to feel competent at their job and their frustration, sense of failure, and disappointment when challenging behaviour escalates beyond their control. As previously mentioned, the importance of high-quality relationship is significant for teachers and when relatedness is affected teacher motivation and sense of success are also affected.

Stories

Stories are a powerful means of conveying ideas, emotions and beliefs. Stories allow the narrator to explore meaning through the narrative (Cohen et al., 2011).

Three stories are shared here because they illustrate beautifully the themes outlined above and also because the sum of the whole story has nuance that is perhaps greater than the parts. The stories are almost verbatim although the data has been cleaned to remove unnecessary umms, pauses and sentence restarts.

Teachers were invited to share a story with the interview question:

- Think about a recent interaction with a child that you were dealing with, where you found the behaviour challenging. Describe the situation for me. What happened? What you did and what was the overall outcome?

Why These Stories?

These three stories illustrate the desire teachers have to restore calm and return to teaching. They include elements of the main themes: *What teachers do: Actions*, and; *What teachers think: Beliefs and Feelings*. They also demonstrate aspects of all the subthemes: *Reactive and Proactive Strategies, Help, Beliefs, Feelings*, and *Theories about cause*.

In each story, the teacher uses some sort of reactive strategy to respond to the student in the moment of challenging behaviour. All three teachers allowed the student time and space to express their emotions and to attempt to self-regulate their behaviour. Other reactive strategies visible in these stories included comfort and support, moving the other students and distraction. Story One includes a lengthy description of the development of a proactive and personalised strategy aimed at reducing the reoccurrence of the challenging behaviour. Story Two specifically mentions two different instances of seeking help from colleagues.

Teachers expressed their belief that problems needed to be fixed and that harm caused be made right. They also talked about the importance of teaching, and the effect that dealing with the student with challenging behaviour had on the other students. The importance of a positive relationship between teacher and student is evident in the stories. Teachers talked about their feelings of frustration and failure and concern for the safety of others was evident in all three stories.

While these stories were collected during the 1:1 interviews, before the education sessions were conducted, aspects of the principles of the CPS approach are evident in the strategies teachers employed and the beliefs that they demonstrated. Story One describes the collaborative development of a plan that encourages an alternative response to throwing things and storming out of the room. The teacher and student worked together to create a safe space that met the student's needs. The stories also contain examples of teachers attribution of cause. Story Three describes a positive internal attribution of the student having concern for the teacher not being listened to. Story One attributes the challenging behaviour to both external triggers and the child's inability to manage his emotions. From the teacher's perspective of SDT, these stories demonstrate autonomy as teachers made decisions about appropriate actions. They also illustrate the issue of competence with examples of teachers acting in ways that they felt were successful and also in ways that they felt had been unsuccessful, and that left them feeling frustrated and inadequate.

The stories are presented below, without interrupting commentary, so that the wider context and interacting nature of the themes can be appreciated.

Story One.

T7: So I'm going to use a wee boy. He hits, he goes from calm to 20 within seconds and it could be anything. Some child has looked at him. Something has happened. His brother, usually his family, has annoyed him or pushed his buttons in some way. So he reacts with throwing or storming or hitting, punching. He's perceived something has not gone his way. He threw a whole lot of chairs and books and things in the classroom and then stormed out. So I followed him. I said, "We're ok." Everyone was fine and we went outside. And then he threw all of the shoes. He started throwing our shoes. So I just said to him, "That makes you feel better when you throw shoes, doesn't it. Shall we throw them all?" He just sort of looked at me and I said, "Just keep going. Can you reach that? Can you get them in the swale do you reckon?" So he threw everyone's shoes. We stood there, we stayed there. I said, "I'm not going anywhere but you just keep going and I'm just going to stand here, just to make sure everyone else is safe". So he threw all of the shoes and then he looked at me. I said, "I can see you're calmer now. Do you feel better?" He was like, "Yes!" So, "Right, what do we need to do now though?" He was like, "Right well I need to get them all" and I'm like, "Yes you do". So we had to go get the shoes. He got them all and then he matched them and then we put them all back. It took an hour but he went from heightened to learning in that hour and was aware, cause he was throwing things and I was like, "Well you need to kia tu patu of the people, You can't throw them at children". So if people came he'd throw them that way. He just needed the throwing. So when he was calm we went inside and we talked about it and I said, "Oh look, I can see you get frustrated", and I said, "When you hurt people that's not.. You know, your friends don't like it. It's not safe", and I said, "So how can we help you? You like to throw things, would that be something you'd do if we got a ball and you could throw it?" He was like, "Yeah". I said, "What else?" He said he wanted to be by

himself. So he made a nest. That's the best way I can describe it, under my desk where I sit and he put... so he talked about places that were safe, so he put... we went on my computer and he found coconut trees and some chocolate cake and he put them under there. I said, "So this is your space. It's no one else's but when you are feeling really angry inside then you come and sit here until you feel calm". He said, "Oh that works for me". I said, "But you like to throw, so how can we?"... He said, "What about pushing?" cause he pushes a lot of children. So we then went, "Well I can put some green hands on our doors and you can push those, cause you can't hurt the door". He's like "Oh yeah". So he found hands. We put them on, and he would push and push and push those and then he would sit in his... And it's a good strategy for him. He learnt. Sometimes I'd say, "Oh I can see you are getting really grumpy. Do you want to go to your space?" He'd go, "Yes!" And then he'd go away. So he was learning.

PW: [07:22] He'd go there with some direction. Would he go by himself?

T7: Or he'd go by himself. Sometimes I would be working on the other side of the room and then I'd see him stomping across the room and he would go in there. So another boy, that was the same with his anger, he thought that that was a nice idea for him too so he had another space. I put him under [teacher's] desk. And sometimes they'd be there together but by themselves. Just in there alone. Just playing with blocks or just sitting there. I suppose I like to find out why the behaviour is happening so I can help them to deal with it cause it's a big emotion. A lot of our kids come with, so you need to understand that emotion to help them deal with it.

Story Two

T3: So the one that really sticks in my mind. I was taking a poetry session as part of our reading for our newest children to school and I would have had 15 fairly new children to school. Sitting on the mat. I was reading some poems from the poetry book that they have a copy of too. One of the wee boys who is meant to be in my group wasn't joining us on the mat but he was just doing his own thing at the back. I was just carrying on. I think I might have invited him to join us once but that was it. We just carried on. Then he picked up a chair and was hitting it down behind other children on the mat and saying, "If you listen to [Teacher] I'm going to hit you with the chair". So they were trying really hard to look at the poem but he was just banging it down behind them. Then I was praising the children for sitting and listening and things, but that seemed to make him angrier. He tried to target the child that I had praised for listening. He started throwing chairs, this all happened very quickly. I just got the children up and said, "Oh! Let's go out into the main space". As I was doing that he started punching me in the bottom. I managed to position myself to get the children, put me between him and them. I got them out into the main space and did a heads up to another teacher and then I just stayed in that room with him and he just threw chairs and equipment and threatened to hit me with a wobbly stool. Held it above his head and said, "I'm going to hit you with this". He did throw it at me but lightly. Not with a lot of force. In the end I walked out and he followed me, hitting me in the bottom. He followed me all the way to the office. I got help.

PW: [09:51] And follow on from that? You went back to class presumably?

T3: First of all I got checked in with someone. Once he was here [office] he was really calm and pleasant and was engaging with other people in the space. Then our

DP rang home but they weren't able to come and get him so he spent the rest of the time playing out here.

PW: Other follow up for him or not?

T3: I think that was early on in the piece so it wasn't an official stand down or anything like that. It was just us really trying to work out what's going on. But he was rung to be picked up, at that time couldn't be.

PW: [11:06] How were you feeling through all of that process?

T3: At different times different things. At the end when I was walking down and he was punching me in the bottom following me I felt quite successful, cause I was like [laughing] "How am I going to get you out of here?" and the fact that I didn't talk to him but he just followed hitting me. So I felt quite good about that strategy cause I was like, "Oh no", you know.

PW: He wasn't threatening the other kids?

T3: At that time no. And I wanted him to come to the office and that's what he was doing and I wasn't having to fill in a restraint form for that because I hadn't restrained him. That was a bonus. When he was threatening the children and banging the chair behind them and he was saying to them, "You are stupid and you are dumb if you listen to [teacher] you are dumb". That battle in my mind. I want to be teaching. I want to be teaching the 15 ones who were there and want to be learning. It's like that total thinking in your mind the whole time. When do I jump ship and stop my teaching to deal with this. And going through your mind the whole time, what's worked with him before? A little bit of that exasperation like, I'm not even putting any pressure on you to learn and you are still wrecking what we are doing. That just juggling in your mind trying to think fast and things like that.

PW [13:01] And after? How does it make you feel after?

T3: I suppose there's all those feelings of useless and inadequate. Those feelings of horribleness. It's some of those children's first day at school and that's what they have dealt with on their first day here. I'd love it to be an awesome thing starting school. Our being fortunate here to have people who do have a lot of knowledge about stuff and access to, you know. I know there are people I can go to for help and people that have a lot of knowledge and aren't saying, "Yes we can fix this straight away", but do have other ideas for trying things out and help.

Story Three

T10: I have the group in one of the break out rooms and we are working in there. So I'm teaching the kids and this one boy, he didn't want to do the work or was finding it... I don't know what was happening to him in the moment. He just started to get quite worked up. Maybe someone said something to him or the kids weren't listening to me and he always finds it quite hard when people aren't listening to the teacher. Like he gets quite offended by that. That's what starts to get him quite worked up and so he'll try and like, "stop doing that, stop doing that." He'll try and, not defend me but try and help me out a little bit and that gets him quite worked up. He got so worked up that it led to throwing furniture, yelling at people, pushing furniture and then my reaction was, with him, and what we've talked about is to let him cool down. So I get all the other kids. We stand up and we go out of the room and we sit down in another spot and we continue on with the lesson and he stays in the room and has his moment.

PW: [05:44] And he does stay?

T10: He does stay but he will kick and scream and throw and do whatever he wants to do in that time, but I've made everyone else safe. He stays in there. I don't keep him in there. I check on him. I say I'm coming back, I'm going to check on you. He just has his moment to cool down. He's got things that he can play with. Like he's got, we've talked about having lego to cool down but in that time he won't. If I can catch him before he gets to that point maybe it will work. But he will do whatever, throw everything, after a while he will calm down. We'll talk about it and he'll fix what he's done.

PW: [06:28] When you say a while. How long is typical?

T10: It just depends really. Depends on what kind of state he is in. Sometimes it could be five minutes, sometimes it could be fifteen and also depending on who has spoken to him, if the other children have reacted to him as well maybe. So if, I haven't got the kids out quickly enough and there's still people in there they'll irritate him possibly. Then he will keep going. He'll maybe try and... He's never hit them but he will threaten to sort of, he'll throw things or he'll push up against them quite hard and so that's irritating for him, so if I haven't gotten everyone out of the room quick enough it could go for longer. Anywhere up to fifteen minutes. Yeah.

PW: [07:17] So this particular instance that you are thinking about. The outcome was? Calmly came back? Or?

T10: I stayed out with the other kids until he'd had his moment, he's had his time to calm down, cause we've really talked about calming down and how can we make things right. Like it's ok to be mad. It's ok to have these moments but how can we fix it after. I'm still teaching but I go in and check on him every five minutes just to say, hey I'm here are you ready to talk yet and he'll say no or yes and then I'll go back. So I do that a few times and then by after say fifteen minutes I go and say, are you ok? Do you want to talk about it? And he'll sort of nod and we'll sit down and have a talk about it and then we talk about how to make it right and then he'll normally just fix the furniture and whatever he's done.

PW: [08:10] And come back and join the group?

T10: Yep and he's always very remorseful. He's always wanting to please. That's when my empathy comes in and that's when I start to feel quite sad for him. He doesn't want to have this big hoo ha. He doesn't want to throw furniture, it's just in that moment that's what he does. He's very upset about it after he's done it. So it's lots of talking with him. Lots of talking about it after and how can we fix it the next

time and how can we stop it before it gets to there. I've been working really hard with him on that.

CPS as a Useful Approach

This section contains the findings from the focus group discussion answering the second research question, What are primary school teachers' perceptions and practical considerations of CPS as a useful approach to help teachers manage challenging behaviours in the classroom? The "usefulness" of any strategy employed to respond to challenging behaviour can be described in terms of its effectiveness at preventing or reducing the intensity or frequency of challenging behaviour. If a strategy proves "useful" then teachers will use it again to solve different problems and with different students. If it is ineffective or has too many barriers to be "useful," then teachers will not persevere with this strategy.

Links to Phase One Themes

The thematic analysis of the focus group conversations showed ideas that matched many of the themes from the first phase of the research. Teachers talked about strategies including mindfulness, circle time, first-then and other specific activities that were adapted to the needs of individual children.

That's where circle time comes in so handy. Sessions like that where you role play and model. If you see something that's a lagging skill or something that's not happening you don't identify the child but you identify what's causing the problem (Teacher 6).

I was just sort of thinking what's that kid do during mindfulness. If that's his skill that he lagging, that would be a good place for him to learn it (Teacher 9).

What's the next step? Now he's beginning to realise what he needs for the next step and I say, Ok. We've made one of those first, next after boxes for him.

He'll go I need to have that. Go get it. Find all the stuff (Teacher 5).

Teachers also expressed their feelings, including frustration and being disheartened.

The plan B conversation. We found that it can be quite frustrating and sometimes that caused an escalation in the child. What do you think you can do to help with this? "I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN DO". Oh my goodness we're just back at the start (Teacher 2).

In our team we filled out an ALSUP for one guy, same thing, CRT x five people. Hour and a half each for one person for one sliver that you're going to work on. We didn't pick our, even top ten percent because it was just too hard. Too hard and quite disheartening actually (Teacher 11).

Another expression of feeling was the desire to be allowed to teach and the hope for success and for a strategy that would work effectively to change children's behaviour.

I wouldn't use it for every child. I have to do a wee bit of teaching in between the assessment (Teacher 11).

Sometimes it feels like if you put in the time it deserved you wouldn't get any other teaching done. You'd only be doing this teaching (Teacher 3).

I think that helps. That's probably where we could work with someone a bit easier. So you can actually go through the whole process and actually be able to put it in place. So someone that's got a problem that is actually solveable (Teacher 6).

Several comments were made that linked to teacher's beliefs, including the importance of relationship building, *...it has really helped with relationships with some of the trickier children (Teacher 12)*, and the belief that hearing the messages about lagging skills will change the challenging behaviour.

The fact that if we do circle time and talk about these lagging skills a lot of the children aren't there at the time. They don't get that message that everyone else has got (Teacher 2).

Two comments were made theorising about the cause of challenging behaviour. One comment was about the home being the problem and the other was around an undiagnosed disability.

One teacher commented on the fact that the CPS approach challenged her to justify her opinion with observable data rather than having an educated guess about what was happening for a child.

One thing doing the ALSUP highlighted for me is how you think you know your babies but you don't. There's still five talented people I work with and we were just doing like educated guesses. Educated guesses or noticings of what was going on in the classroom but when you really drill down and ask some of those sticky questions actually I can't provide you evidence I'm just saying that, you know. I had to go back and find some evidence (Teacher 11).

These examples reinforce the themes developed from the Phase One data analysis. They are a mixture of positive regard for strategies that teachers felt were helpful and negative reaction to aspects of the CPS process. In some instances teachers felt that parts of the CPS approach added to their frustration or did not produce the quick change in behaviour that they were hoping for.

CPS Specific Themes

Three new themes emerged that relate specifically to the evaluation of the CPS approach. These themes are titled; Time, New Perspectives and Next Steps.

Time

The theme of time represents the main criticism that teachers had of the CPS approach. The time that it takes to complete the ALSUP assessment was seen as a significant negative factor that would hamper teachers efforts to adopt the CPS approach.

We did the ALSUP on somebody and it took an hour and twenty minutes

(Teacher 2).

It took a long time (Teacher 4).

That's part of the problem. Having the time (Teacher 6).

It's too long. It takes too long to do the ALSUP in such detail (Teacher 9).

Having time for the ALSUP conversations and doing the lagging skills is tricky (Teacher 12).

Teachers felt that the time it takes to complete the ALSUP may not be time well spent considering the information they glean. Comments were made about searching for efficiencies or ways to short cut the assessment.

You think that over time. Do you think that you'd refine it? And take out what you felt was working well. Just practice those bits. Or do you think you have to do the whole thing. That's my wondering (Teacher 8).

There's a benefit to the whole thing isn't there. Would you be more likely to use it if you had a bit of a short cut? (Teacher 3).

If you had a short cut way. Yeah (Teacher 7).

I think with the ALSUP the more you use it the more you are aware of the lagging skills and therefore you can identify them a bit quicker. So that will speed up (Teacher 12).

Teachers expressed the view that when under pressure in the classroom the time that Plan B conversations would take meant that they would likely resort to a more teacher directed approach.

I find as soon as it's the pressure of time or the pressure of other children's needs is when I just fall back into my older habits. "Do that. Do that. Let's go" (Teacher 3).

There was discussion of the value of using the ALSUP guide as a group assessment tool that informed circle time lessons for a group of children as well as using it as an individual assessment tool.

I just got the lagging sheet and beside it I wrote children who are having problems in my kaiawhina group in those areas. Where there was a bulk of children that have a problem in there I had a look, and a talk, and a discussion with them about it. ...And put them in where I thought they were having problems. That was quite handy for circle time. Directed my thinking (Teacher 6).

Another challenge, exacerbated by the time pressure teachers felt under, was getting children to talk about their feelings or to contribute solutions when they often lacked language sufficient to the task. They talked about children shrugging their shoulders in response to questions and the fact that it sometimes takes children a long time to express their ideas or that they have difficulty because they do not have the words to describe their feelings, needs or ideas.

Talking about the importance of being able to name those emotions and know how they feel and what it is. You can't talk to someone about how they are

feeling if you don't actually know what the feeling is. Saying, "I feel afraid," or, "it's really loud in here and I get scared". That's quite a big thing to have to say and know about (Teacher 8).

I was saying about shoulder shrugging. Not getting ideas from children about what else we can do to help them (Teacher 3).

You get the shrugs, which is fine because they've never been talked to like this before (Teacher 11).

New Perspectives

The positive theme of new perspectives captured ideas where teachers talked about the benefits of the CPS approach. They spoke positively about the fact that they talked about children differently and responded to children in different ways as a result of having completed the ALSUP assessment.

I think for me doing that the ALSUP actually made you think about how you are working with that child and how you are interacting with them. And I think you changed it around. I noticed it with [child]. My approach was different after doing the ALSUP. Made me think more about what were his blocks.

What were the things that were lagging in his skills that stopped him from learning. So my approach was quite a lot gentler I feel, with him. Cause I was approaching him differently in the class time, he was responding better.

Because I can now see the reason for what he was doing. I was just not seeing the behaviour (Teacher 6).

It made the teachers approach the children differently and after they had done the ALSUP it just meant that they actually haven't had to have a Plan B conversation because they approached the child so differently that they hadn't

come across that child having any problems. So that was a good thing for that (Teacher 2).

Teachers talked about having a deeper understanding of children and the fact that they now thought about lagging skills rather than blaming situations on the child's lack of motivation.

I think doing the ALSUP with that focus on lagging skills has helped break a little bit of, kind of my years of habits of thinking of children's motivation. And thinking they're trying to wind me up. Or they're trying to get attention. That kind of thing. Putting in my view of why they are behaving that way (Teacher 3).

The Plan B conversation helped unpack things a bit more (Teacher 7).

Teachers spoke about the ALSUP, giving them specific things to focus on and work on with the child, rather than dealing with a more general feeling of children being disruptive.

Since we did our ALSUP for [child]. I think the thing that we focused on was his personal space. The fact that he invades people's personal space and that triggers their behaviours. So we figured if we targeted that particular thing then that would make other things a lot smoother (Teacher 4).

I think that was a big one for us actually. Kind of identifying one thing. There were so many issues and then once we got that child and focused on that one thing I think things did begin to improve (Teacher 5).

Teachers also talked about the benefits they saw in having their teaching colleagues supporting each other and all talking the same language with the child. They believed that children were shown more understanding, empathy and care as a result of the teachers having completed the ALSUP assessment.

Just made us more mindful about how to approach those children and having that collaborative approach to that child, that means that they are getting the same message from everyone. They are getting care and understanding from everyone too (Teacher 12).

I think it has in our studio with not only the people that are involved in this but also cause we did it as a team. All of us together so I think everybody's kind of like, Oh ok. We've put strategies in place to help him (Teacher 5).

Next Steps

The final theme related specifically to the CPS approach is the Next Steps. The ideas represented under this theme were teacher suggestions about how to embed the CPS approach or supports that would help staff to use the approach more effectively.

Teachers wondered how to include parents more effectively in working collaboratively around lagging skills and unsolved problems.

Do we try and bring these parents in to those discussions initially. So they are understanding (Teacher 12).

Teachers also expressed a desire for support for how to go about teaching the lagging skills.

It is taking these children who are having difficulty and then giving them really set things to teach them. At the moment you say. Yeah I've got a lagging skill. So what. What do I do now? (Teacher 11)

How do you help that child with that lagging skill? There are a set of skills that you would teach anyone with that thing. You might approach it a little bit differently but it's still that set of skills that that kid needs to learn, right? (Teacher 2).

One teacher talked about the CPS approach being more effective if it were embedded into school systems and practices.

I suppose for me thinking about the continuation of this approach would be I'm more likely to use something if it becomes a little bit more ingrained. If we had a, 'this is what we do here,' thing. This is integrated into our thinking room or whatever we do and the language is integrated there. Maybe we change our restorative chat things to have more of this language or something. I feel for me, the more I become indoctrinated with something the more easily I can use it because I know that we'll all be using the same (Teacher 3).

Teachers also talked about having a prompt card to remind them of sentence starters for the Plan B conversation.

When we started restorative practice all those years ago and we all went off and did that big course. Those cue cards. The little cue cards. I kept them so close. Until they became part of my practice. Prompt card (Teacher 8).

It's that having a wee cheat sheet that you know (Teacher 3).

In general, the teachers spoke positively about CPS as being an approach that they saw had benefits for the development of deeper relationships based on greater understanding. The suggestions teachers had were for ways to embed the approach in their practice and for resources to help them more effectively help children develop prosocial behaviour.

Summary

The results of this study show that teachers take action reactively in the face of challenging behaviour with cognisance of their responsibility to provide a safe and learning focussed environment for all the children in their care. Teachers also act

proactively to attempt to reduce the frequency and severity of incidents of challenging behaviour. They employ various strategies that are influenced by their beliefs about what works. The experiences that teachers have also evoked feelings that influence their beliefs and actions. Despite the range of strategies teachers used to respond to challenging behaviour, feelings of frustration and failure impacted on the teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

All the teachers in this study spoke positively about their belief that developing strong positive relationships with children was a crucial step to helping children to develop both academic and social skills. Some of the coercive behaviourist strategies teachers employed could be viewed as conflicting with the importance of relationship development that teachers believe in. Teachers were willing to try the CPS approach because they were seeking out strategies that would help to reduce children's challenging behaviour. The general evaluation of the CPS approach was that it could help teachers develop positive relationships and gain a better understanding of the children, although there were concerns about the time investment required to use the approach to maximum effect.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Ko te wānanga te tamaiti. Ko te tamaiti te wānanga.

The wisdom is within our children. The children are the wisdom

(Fraser, 2019)

This chapter seeks to offer an analysis and interpretation of the research findings in light of relevant theory and literature. The first research question asked teachers to describe their perspective on challenging behaviour at school. The findings showed that teachers act in ways consistent with their belief that it is their responsibility to maintain stable classrooms where the focus is on learning. Teachers sought to maintain stability through a variety of reactive and proactive strategies and controls. These were ‘tools of the trade’ for teachers and when their tools appeared ineffective teachers felt frustration and a sense of failure. They worked hard to find new and effective tools that allowed stability and control to be returned.

The second phase of the research introduced teachers to a new tool (CPS) and had them trial it and reflect on the usefulness of the CPS approach in their classrooms. Findings showed that teachers experienced positive outcomes from trialling the CPS approach and had suggestions for how the approach could be embedded in their daily practice. The biggest challenge they experienced was the amount of time it took to complete the ALSUP assessment and to have Plan B conversations.

Teachers explained their response to challenging behaviour in a number of different ways. Explanation of reactive responses was often linked to concerns about the safety of the student exhibiting the challenging behaviour or the other students in the class. Physical intervention, distraction or removal of students from the conflict were strategies often focussed on student safety. Comments also referred to the need to “get back to teaching” and, therefore, reactive strategies appeared to focus on

minimising the disruption to teaching the challenging behaviour was causing. The beginning of Story 2 (p. 102) describes the teacher's focus on teaching and the strategies she employs aimed at ensuring teaching and learning continue in spite of the disruptive behaviour. Teachers also showed they understood some of the physiological aspects of the fight-or-flight response associated with conflict and frequently talked about allowing time and space for the child to calm down before they communicated with them about the challenging behaviour. Teachers recognised that sometimes the student has physical needs (thirst, hunger, sleep) that might need attention before the challenging behaviour can be effectively addressed. The belief that harm needed to be repaired was a common justification for expectations and teacher actions after the immediate heightened state of challenging behaviour had passed. Teachers believed that children needed to apologise to anyone they had hurt and restore the classroom environment if possible. Story 1 (p. 100) includes a description of a child throwing shoes from the classroom shoe rack. The teacher allowed the throwing-of-the-shoes in the moment of heightened emotion. Once the child was calm the expectation that the shoes be returned to the rack was enforced. Teachers also recognised that they needed to maintain personal control over their own emotions and the way that they responded to students in the moment of challenging behaviour. At times teachers would step out of the situation and ask for help from a colleague so that their own emotions did not inflame the situation. Teachers also recognised that students are individuals and may need different responses at different times.

Under the theme of beliefs, teachers expressed a number of ideas that are addressed by adopting a CPS approach. Teachers talked about their belief that 1:1 support was required and that positive relationships are a significant key to success with regard to changing behaviour. The CPS approach is an individual response that

relies heavily on a trusting and open relationship between the child and the teacher. The empathy and invitation steps of the Plan B conversation enhance relationship building and facilitate collaboration. Teacher beliefs about the need to fix the harm caused and their expectations of appropriate behaviour are able to be addressed through the 'define adult concerns' step of the Plan B conversation. The desire for consistency expressed by teachers can be met by the consistent application of the CPS process, which has built into it the flexibility and potential for individualisation of response that is needed to meet the individual needs of each child. Many of the theories of cause that teachers identified are things that children and teachers have no control over changing. Rather than just guessing about the cause or blaming situations beyond the control of teacher or child, the ALSUP directs teachers to think about specific lagging skills and unsolved problems. The Plan B conversation then gives the teachers a process to talk about the unsolved problems in a proactive, collaborative and solution focussed way.

Motivation

Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) provides a window into the discussion of what motivates or 'works' for the child as well as what motivates and 'works' for the teacher. SDT also provides us with a useful theoretical perspective to examine motivation in relation to both the CPS belief that the child is already motivated to do well and the behaviourist perspective that some reward for contingent behaviour is motivating. Teachers held beliefs and employed strategies that demonstrated their view that student motivation was a significant issue that required intervention that was external to the child. Again this behaviourist view was often evident in the deployment of rewards and consequences as a primary strategy for encouraging children to do what teachers wanted them to. Teachers implemented

reward and monitoring systems they believed would motivate the child to engage in more appropriate behaviour.

Kohn (1993) is extremely critical of the behaviourist view of rewards and urges teachers to rethink their belief in the motivational power of rewards and consequences. He presents the argument that rewards are actually as controlling as punishments, that they rupture relationships by exacerbating the power imbalance already present in the teacher-child relationship, and that they require little understanding of the reasons that challenging behaviour is happening. The teachers in this study made comments that suggested they were questioning whether the rewards and monitoring systems they were implementing were effective in motivating the changes they were hoping for. Kohn (1993) also agrees with Deci and Ryan (1985) when they argue that extrinsic rewards reduce intrinsic motivation. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008) draws this distinction between different types of motivation and argues that it is the type of motivation rather than the amount of motivation that is important. The broadest distinction is drawn between autonomous motivation where the individual experiences a sense of self-endorsement for their actions and controlled motivation where external regulation or internalised avoidance of shame provide the driver for action. Autonomous motivation leads to better outcomes.

The human needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, as described by SDT, are visible in the themes identified in phase one of this study and the strategies suggested in the CPS approach. However, from the child's perspective, the idea of autonomy could be somewhat contradictory to the sense of control teachers are seeking to maintain over the classroom environment. Conflict may occur because teachers are asking children to do things that the children do not want to do. When children are permitted to choose, it follows that challenging behaviour may be reduced. This autonomy gives the child control of their activity, and there is no need

for conflict over activity choice. Teachers in this study included collaborative strategies and student choice as proactive strategies they employed to encourage prosocial behaviours. Autonomy is addressed within CPS through the Invitation Step. Children can suggest solutions that meet their needs and as long as the adult concerns can also be addressed and the proposed solution has no other drawbacks, then the child's solution can be adopted. If this effects positive change then the child has experienced success through means of their own choosing. This sense of autonomy was evident in Story 1 (p.100) where the teacher and the student together developed several strategies to help the child safely manage his emotions. Teacher autonomy was evident in comments about strategies that teachers used and in their search for strategies that worked. A few comments demonstrated a challenge to autonomy where teachers indicated that a strategy was imposed on them by someone else.

The SDT idea of competence helps explain the questions teachers raised about underlying causes of challenging behaviour. Teachers described situations where they believed that the challenging behaviour had been triggered by the child's frustration at not being able to competently engage in the learning activity they were expected to participate in. SDT suggests that when individuals are not operating with a sense of competence, frustration ensues. Conversely, if they can confidently tackle the tasks at hand, believing that this task is within their capability, competence is developed and is transferred to new and more difficult tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985). CPS addresses questions of competence both with the ALSUP assessment where the focus is on the specific situations that the child is having difficulty with and also with the Plan B question, "I've noticed you are having difficulty with What's up?" The ALSUP assessment and Plan B questions provide teachers with opportunities to work together with the child to increase their skills and thus improve their competence.

Teacher's sense of concern for their own competence was visible in a number of comments that appear under the theme *feelings*, with expressions that they were not doing their job well. When teachers employ strategies that they feel are effective their sense of competence is enhanced and they feel successful. Teacher motivation is likely to increase, and job satisfaction is enhanced when teachers believe that they are doing a good job, that their tools are effective and that students are learning. When the strategies teachers employ are ineffective, teachers' sense of competence is diminished and result in feelings of failure and frustration. Teacher stress increases and job satisfaction declines.

The third basic psychological need described by SDT is relatedness. Teachers in this study all described the importance of building strong positive relationships to help them interact successfully with students. Their belief in the power of relationships to effect change is echoed by Baker (2006) when she posits that positive relationships between teachers and children help scaffold the development of social skills, behavioural competencies and self-regulation. The teachers in this study confirm the perspective of Pianta (1999), that teacher-child relationships are a critical resource that can either pose a risk to the child or potentially be a resource for improving developmental outcomes. When they have positive relationships with children teachers are more optimistic about the possibilities for change and the impact of their interactions on the student's behaviour. When the relationship with the student is strained teachers express negative feelings, increased stress and frustration, and talk about the energy required to manage student behaviour. Just at the most basic level of human need positive teacher child relationships contribute significantly to the satisfaction of the child's needs for safety, belonging and esteem (Maslow, 1943; McLeod, 2018). Higher-level cognitive, aesthetic and self-actualisation needs cannot be developed without the more basic needs being largely met. For example, a pupil

needs to feel emotionally and physically safe and accepted before they can develop cognitively. Teachers in this study showed a strong desire to meet the child's needs for safety and belonging with their emphasis on the need to develop strong positive relationships with the children they found most challenging. The level of frustration and sense of failure and hard work teachers described shows there is a significant emotional and energy cost to teachers that they invest in relationship development. The cost to teacher well-being may be equally significant. The respectful approach of CPS, based significantly on the importance of listening to the child and then working with the child to develop a plan, may help foster positive relationships. Teachers in this study reported the development of a more positive relationship to have been their experience of the CPS approach. This was not about being the child's 'best mate'. The focus remained on the unsolved problem and the teacher's expectations of learning happening and safety of others being maintained. Relatedness on its own is not enough to maintain motivation. If teacher and student lack competence and have no sense of autonomy or volition over their actions then SDT predicts their level of motivation to change will be decreased.

The SDT aspect of relatedness also matches discussion about cultural awareness (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Durie, 2006; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2016). Culturally aware teachers will consider the language they use and the manner in which they communicate and interact, both with children and with their families. A teacher's awareness of, and behaviour in relation to, cultural expectations can create either a barrier or a bridge. No mention of the need to be culturally aware was made by any of the research participants. Perhaps the questions of this study did not allow teachers the opportunity or prompt them to express any thoughts on cultural responsiveness. Teachers must take cultural factors into account when they consider how to respond to challenging behaviour. The mere fact that Māori and Pasifika

pupils are disproportionately represented in the stand-down, suspension, and exclusion statistics is an indication that the school system is not meeting the needs of these children as well as it could (Ministry of Education, 2019b).

From a behaviourist view of motivation, students' behaviour could be reinforced in ways that a teacher or school might not anticipate or be aware of. Indeed, Greene (2014) argues that a core assumption guiding the thinking of many school responses to challenging behaviour is that the behaviour is somehow 'working' for the child. This behaviourist view (Kohn, 1993) suggests that the child is getting something desirable or avoiding something undesirable by engaging in this behaviour. Greene says that many adults are led to a conclusion that the behaviours are purposeful or intentional because if they were not 'working' the child would not continue to do them. This leads to school systems that punish challenging behaviour so the behaviours do not 'work' any more, or reward adaptive behaviours that encourage the behaviours that 'work' better. Some of the strategies teachers talked about using were designed to reward the desired behaviour. When the behaviourist rewards are not effective teachers are left wondering whether to increase the reward, change to a negative consequence or change the strategy. Teachers can get tangled up in an ineffective cycle of reward or consequence that in many cases does not seem to effect the positive change that they desire. Teachers feel responsible for helping children to develop appropriate skills, and when they are unsuccessful this can add significantly to their feelings of failure and frustration. When teachers implement strategies they believe ought to be effective, but they see no change in student behaviour, teachers may experience a decrease in empathy for the student. Teachers' motivation to find more effective responses to challenging behaviour may be lowered causing a further disconnect between student and teacher. This could become a snowball effect, negatively impacting on teachers efficacy and wellbeing. CPS may

help reconnect teachers and students, and reignite compassion and empathy in teachers who are feeling stressed and frustrated.

Expectations

The themes that emerged in phase one of the study reinforced the view that the conflict or challenge that teachers experience from student behaviour seems related, in part, to the disconnect between teacher's expectations of appropriate student behaviour and the actions (or inactions) a student exhibits. Teacher expectations may help or hinder their response to challenging behaviour. The teacher may hold a reasonable expectation that the student is unable to meet because of some lagging skill. As previously described, the SDT need for competence would suggest that a child unable to competently meet an expectation will lack the motivation to perform as expected. Two responses to this situation create different outcomes. The teacher can hold to the expectation and attempt to motivate, cajole, or coerce the student into compliance. In this situation, if the student is still unable to meet the expectation because of their lagging skills, it seems likely that frustration and conflict will result. A second possibility is that the teacher modifies the expectation so that it becomes something the child can competently achieve. The CPS approach encourages teachers to engage collaboratively with children to determine whether the expectations are within their ability, and if not, to work together to either modify the expectation or develop the student's skills so that they can meet reasonable expectations.

Teacher expectation also underlies the distinction made in the Church report (Church & University of Canterbury Education Department Team, 2003) between children who have the potential for 'typical' development and those who do not. The results of this study showed teachers thinking in this way when they emphasised the need to understand the underlying causes of challenging behaviour. Teachers

sometimes expressed greater patience and understanding of children if the cause was something that the teacher accepted as outside of the child's control. A diagnosis of a processing disorder, for example, led to expressions of patience and understanding. Teacher frustration was evident when they expected that a child could, and therefore should, comply with their instructions. Teachers commented on the maturation of the child (Lindon, 2012) and the intellectual capacity of the child (Church & University of Canterbury Education Department Team, 2003) as being factors that would impact on the effectiveness of the CPS approach. Teachers also talked about establishing expectations and attempting to reason with a child about their behaviour. The 'define adult concerns' step of the Plan B conversation provides an opportunity for expectations to be explained with reasons for those expectations articulated in a nonthreatening manner. This step also enables teachers to articulate the concerns they have about the safety of other students and the disruption to learning that challenging behaviour creates.

Teacher Actions

As described previously in the results chapter, teachers responded to challenging behaviour both reactively, in the heat of the moment, and proactively with strategies designed to minimise or eliminate challenging behaviour. Teachers in this study expressed a number of different strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour in the heat of the moment. A number of those strategies meet the needs of the physiological factors that affect pupils in a heightened state. Howard (2018) explains the hormonal effects of adrenaline and cortisol on the aroused student that would prevent them from engaging effectively in any discussion about appropriate behaviour. Teachers showed an understanding of the needs of students in this

heightened state with the provision of strategies like attending to physical needs, providing comfort and support, and providing time and space.

Under the theme of *Help*, teachers talked about searching for strategies that work and about communicating with colleagues, support agencies and family. In evaluating the CPS approach, teachers talked about being able to use the ALSUP assessment to focus their attention on the areas of an unsolved problem rather than just repeatedly talking about the challenging behaviour. Rather than continuing to talk about theories of causality the ALSUP helps identify specific lagging skills that can then be the focus of targeted teaching or support from teachers, specialists and family. Having accurate and positive language may help teachers to communicate their concerns more effectively and also give them solution-focused language to communicate with the child and their family about the challenging behaviour. It could be argued that the potential effectiveness of the CPS approach lies in bringing together some things that teachers already do with language and ideas that focus on the lagging skills rather than the challenging behaviour and lays it out in a step by step process for teachers to follow.

The CPS approach urges teachers to consider unmet expectations as an unsolved problem and lagging skill on the child's part. If the focus only stays on the behaviour that the teacher wishes would stop, then solutions mostly explore behaviourist responses that attempt to motivate children through rewards or consequences. Teachers in this study used several positive, proactive strategies, including teaching appropriate behaviours, alongside directive, collaborative and monitoring strategies. A tool that was mentioned by teachers as having a positive effect on classroom behaviour is the teaching of mindfulness. Teachers at the case school have been trained to deliver mindfulness lessons for their classes and also encouraged to engage in mindfulness practices themselves. In reflecting on their trial

of the CPS approach, teachers commented on the improved relationships that were fostered by their deeper understanding of the student. The collaborative focus of CPS, if embedded into school practices, could go some way to combating the “Plan A” style, adult imposed solutions that are often the standard school response to challenging behaviour. By adopting a CPS approach and integrating it into school-based assessments and procedures teachers may feel they have a tool that fills a gap between what they currently do and the next tier of response. Teachers talked about asking for help when their own resource and expertise was insufficient. The RTLB service is often the next level response that schools go to for assistance. If schools adopt the CPS approach then tools like the ALSUP assessment may provide an information bridge and a positive focus on skill development. This may assist the collaboration between teachers and RTLB, and if “Plan B” conversations become the norm, then students become an integral part of the problem-solving team.

Teachers talked about identifying underlying problems, which the ALSUP assessment tool is designed to do. Research participants talked about the clarity that completing the ALSUP brought to the way that they thought about children and what the triggers or underlying causes of the child’s challenging behaviour might be.

Teachers also expressed a desire to collaborate with children and to hear their ideas about what might work for them. The Office of Children’s Commissioner asked NZ children and young people about their experiences of education (Office of Children’s Commissioner & NZSTA, 2018). They report six key insights that summarise children’s experience of school.

1. Understand me in my whole world
2. People at school are racist towards me
3. Relationships mean everything to me
4. Teach me the way I learn best

5. I need to be comfortable before I can learn

6. It's my life – let me have a say.

The CPS approach with its focus on relationship, connection, understanding and listening addresses many of the needs the children expressed. The CPS invitation step provides an opportunity for teacher and child to work on solutions together and for genuine choice and autonomy to be experienced by the child. The empathy step not only meets the desire of teachers to collaborate with children, but it also addresses the need that teachers expressed to understand the triggers and underlying causes of challenging behaviour. When teachers follow this step and take the time to pause and listen after asking, “What’s up?” the answers to that question may provide teachers with the clarity they are searching for. Additionally, CPS directs teachers’ attention away from spending too much effort theorising about cause and instead urges them to start solving problems with children. Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1972) includes as a principle the belief that the behaviour in question is determined to be deliberate.

Many of the teacher responses described as *understanding triggers*, or, *theories about cause* show that teachers attribute causality for children’s behaviour either to internal intention on the part of the child or external circumstances outside the child’s control. It seemed that where a teacher attributed the child’s challenging behaviour to external factors there was less frustration and increased expression of sympathy, patience or understanding in contrast to those behaviours attributed to the child’s internal motivation being more frustrating for the teachers.

Beliefs and Feelings

Teachers had different opinions about the effectiveness of the strategies they employed. Because the focus of this study was on challenging behaviour, teachers were describing the interactions they had with students that were causing them

concern. Teachers will have had many interactions with different students that could have, but did not, result in challenging behaviour. In some cases, teachers described how their strategies had been effective and the challenging behaviour had been reduced and situations resolved. These successful interactions are not uppermost in teachers' minds when they are asked questions about challenging behaviour. Much of the reflection from teachers about the effectiveness of their strategies described situations where they were left frustrated and searching for different tools. Teachers sought help from more experienced colleagues and from outside experts when they felt that their own resources were not delivering the changes they hoped for. Some frustration was expressed over reward and consequence strategies that were promoted by "experts" but that the teachers felt were often ineffective for the most challenging students.

Many of the teachers expressed the opinion that things are getting worse in relation to challenging behaviour at school. A few of these comments included some theory or attempt at attribution to explain why this worsening behaviour might be true. In other cases, these comments were part of an expression of frustration and a desire to try and make sense of it all. No literature or data, other than the reasonably stable stand down, suspension and exclusion statistics (Ministry of Education, 2019b), could be found to confirm or deny whether there has been an increase in incidence or severity of challenging behaviour. The complexity of causal factors means there is no simple or single answer to the questions about why a child might be behaving in a certain way. Classroom dynamics, school culture, academic achievement pressure, large open learning environments, and any number of other factors may contribute to students challenging behaviour. The CPS approach asks teachers to suspend their need to theorise about cause. Greene (2014) also encourages teachers to recognise that challenging behaviour usually occurs in predictable situations. By conducting the

ALSUP assessment, those situations can be identified and then collaborative plans developed to solve the problems children are experiencing. The CPS approach may align with kaupapa Māori principles and help promote culturally responsive practices and closer connection between students and teachers. In their reflective comments evaluating CPS, a number of the teachers talked about how children's behaviour and their relationships with the teacher were better after trialling the ALSUP assessment and the Plan B conversations.

The historical context surrounding, Ministry of Education policies regarding, and school responses to challenging behaviour could be described on an inclusive-exclusive continuum. While MoE policy is inclusive, and many of the supports available to schools are aimed at keeping the child enrolled and engaged at their local school, it could be argued that some of the supports for the children with the most challenging behaviours are 'too little, too late' for many schools and are only triggered after exclusionary sanctions such as stand down, suspension, or exclusion have been enforced. New government policy (Martin, 2019) introduces Learning Support Coordinators whose job it will be to work alongside teachers and with specialist providers to ensure children receive the support they need to learn. No detail as yet explains who these specialist providers are and where this support sits in relation to the existing RTLB support structure or the role of SENCO that is already functioning in many schools. It is encouraging however that the creation of these Learning Support Coordinators is, at the least, a recognition that the current supports are insufficient for the children whose needs are not being met. It will be interesting to see whether the provision of extra support in this way provides the help that teachers are looking for or whether it reinforces the feeling that dealing with challenging behaviour is not my core job as a teacher and I can just pass this on to an expert who will come and "fix" this child.

Teachers were also frustrated when the strategies they were using to reduce or eliminate the challenging behaviour from happening again seemed ineffective.

Teachers experienced tension when the reward systems that were implemented were applied to groups of students even though teachers recognised that the reward was not motivating for some of the students the system was being applied to. The level of stress this tension places on teachers impacts on their health and well-being, their job satisfaction and for some teachers, the pressure becomes too much, and they choose to leave teaching. Schools already facing challenges in recruiting staff, might face challenges in retaining the staff they do have if they do not find ways of helping teachers navigate all these pressures.

Learning and Socialisation

If the purpose of school is both academic and social learning (Claxton, 2008; Kohn, 1999), then teachers might measure their success in terms of prosocial behaviour as well as academic achievement. The results of this study show this to be true for these teachers. The sense of failure and frustration expressed by teachers was often in relation to their inability to prevent the disruptive behaviours of the children they found challenging. Teachers sometimes felt unable to restore classroom equilibrium and ensure the safety and learning of the other students. Academic achievement was mentioned briefly in two contexts, either that poor academic performance was an explanation of the cause for the challenging behaviour (an attribution related to competence) or teachers expressed concern that continued challenging behaviour would lead to poor academic outcomes for the student concerned or for other students affected by the challenging behaviour. This could be an example of a self-fulfilling cycle. The child is underachieving and responds with behaviour that affects their ability to learn which means that they achieve even less.

To avoid the feelings of shame associated with underachievement they engage in behaviour that affects their learning. This failure loop needs some circuit breaker to allow the student to experience success.

Teachers want to teach. Behaviour that presents a challenge to their ability to teach is seen as maladaptive or socially disruptive and causes stress for teachers who want to 'get on with their jobs'. This desire to teach was largely expressed as a frustration that the challenging behaviours were interrupting their ability to engage in academic instruction. However, teachers also expressed their desire to help children develop social skills and self-regulation. There is a tension between these two perspectives. These teachers recognise and strategise to meet the needs of children with lagging skills while at the same time they plan learning activities that address their academic needs. Both academic and social needs are addressed but the social disruption of challenging behaviour caused greater concern to teachers than academic underachievement. One significant reason for this was the impact that challenging behaviour has on other students.

Another significant finding of this study is the depth of care and intensity of desire these teachers showed in their search for strategies to help children to develop. The reactive strategies teachers use in the heat of the moment show care and respect for children. The many proactive strategies they try, the lengths to which teachers go to look for help, and the emotional investment they make demonstrates their concern and compassion. The willingness these teachers showed to engage in professional learning about the CPS approach, and their thoughtful critique of the positive and negative aspects of the approach shows their commitment to their own professional growth and their desire to find tools that will work to help the children succeed. Teachers face many challenges. Some of these challenges are outside of their control and require solutions at system and policy levels. Teachers have autonomy over many

aspects of their classroom practice and so other challenges are within their control. Addressing the challenges that are within the realm of teachers sphere of influence will require patience, reflection, new learning, experimentation, evaluation and a tremendous amount of energy and commitment.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this research is the small size of the group of participants and the fact that it represents the views of teachers at only one New Zealand primary school. The nature of this case study research is that it merely shines a tiny beam of light on the experiences and views of this small group. Another limitation is that the participants are volunteers and thus already interested in helping children with challenging behaviour. If schools required teachers to use the CPS approach some teachers may resist the compulsion and the effectiveness of the CPS approach in reducing challenging behaviour may be affected. If teachers were unwilling to try to develop positive relationships with students, or they attribute challenging behaviour to causes that limit the possibility of positive change then the effectiveness of CPS as a useful approach will be limited. As this research did not measure the reduction in incidence of challenging behaviour, any findings can only act as prompts for teachers to interrogate their own ideas, attitudes and practice in supporting children with challenging behaviour rather than empirically proving any efficacy of the CPS approach.

A criticism sometimes levelled at case study research is that findings are not able to be generalised. Simons (2009) suggests different ways that she believes it is valid to generalise from a case study. This research uses naturalistic and concept generalization (Simons, 2009) that allows readers to make connections to their own practice. One difficulty with thematic analysis is the potential for ideas to be judged

as being one thing and not another, when in reality many of the ideas expressed by the teachers could be described as both action and belief, or belief and feeling, at the same time. An attempt has been made at the appropriate points in the results section to explain the interpretations made. Given that the focus of the CPS model is on working collaboratively with the child and that parents as guardians are most intimately acquainted with and responsible for their child, the lack of child or parent voice in this research is a significant limitation. A power imbalance exists in the relationship between child and teacher. Even though the CPS approach attempts to reduce the imbalance through a collaborative process this study sheds no light on the child's perspective and whether they felt more empowered and whether their relationships with their teachers were more positive from their perspective. Future research might allow much greater collaboration with children and families, and for the voice of children and parents to be heard. With these limitations in mind, the research was designed to gain valuable information about teachers' perceptions of challenging behaviour and their opinions on the usefulness of CPS as an approach that better supports positive outcomes for children.

Recommendations

The findings of this research hint at a tension between theoretical perspectives and teacher practice. Teachers chose practices that demonstrated their belief in the importance of social connection and high-quality relationship. They also used behaviourist strategies that place an emphasis on reward and consequence. Unpacking theoretical perspectives with teachers may provide an opportunity for teachers to examine whether the strategies they choose line up with their beliefs.

Causation is complex, and in the absence of empirical evidence, teachers are naturally drawn to theorise in an attempt to make sense of their experiences. Research

that helps us understand the causes of challenging behaviour may provide some context for teachers. Critics of qualitative research will want to see quantifiable evidence that shows a reduction of challenging behaviour in the context of CPS compared to other strategies. Research of this type in regular school settings is still lacking.

If schools choose to adopt the CPS approach, there are several recommendations that might aid the effective implementation of the model.

- Embedding the language of CPS into school systems and expectations for the way that staff interact with children will help normalise the approach and entrench the positive language of CPS into the way adults speak with children.
- School policy and procedure documents could be reviewed and language modified to reflect the collaborative and problem solving focus of the CPS approach.
- Key texts such as *Lost at School* (Greene, 2014) and web resources like *Lives in the Balance* (Greene, 2019a) could be linked to in other school documentation on behaviour management.
- Provision of a pocket guide prompt card for Plan B sentence starters could support teachers to use the appropriate language, listen to children and keep the focus on the difficulties or problems children are having not the behaviour they exhibit.
- Schools could consider making the ALSUP assessment part of the RTLB referral process. This would require professional development of the RTLB but would perhaps speed up the assessment and observation process that RTLB embark on after an initial referral.

- Development of a bank of activities and support resources that target the lagging skills would provide teachers with practical ideas to implement that might help them feel they are making some progress or employing appropriate strategies to teach the lagging skills.
- Emotion coaching was identified by teachers in this study as one aspect of language development that children might benefit from. This skill development might help children be better able to engage in Plan B conversations.
- Other professional development opportunities and resources could be catalogued and made easily available to staff. The school this study was conducted in has been involved in professional development around positive teacher-child relationships, student and staff well-being, the effect of trauma on brain development and physiological responses to anxiety, and cultural responsiveness. All these aspects are important and professional development should continue as needed.
- Consideration should be given as to the induction of new staff so that common language is maintained and expectations of staff understood by those who may not have been part of any initial teacher education on CPS.
- Caring for staff is a critical part of making any new initiative stick. Sufficient time and resource must be provided to allow staff to learn about CPS, experiment with ALSUP assessments and Plan B conversations, receive feedback, access support materials or have coaching discussions and debrief appropriately when things go wrong.
- Teachers must be permitted to talk explicitly about their beliefs and strategy choices without fear of sanction while also being able to have their

assumptions challenged. Frustration and a sense of failure are very real feelings for teachers. They need non-judgemental supports that allow emotionally and psychologically safe discussion of concerns and development needs without fear of criticism.

- Asking for help must be seen as a normal expectation rather than as something teachers do because they have failed. Systems for accessing help must be clear and timely access available for assessment of underlying issues that might be contributing to the difficulties children are having.
- Consideration needs to be given as to how best to balance the time constraints. Teachers always have to make decisions about the priority they place on anything they give their time to. The time it takes to complete ALSUP assessments and have Plan B conversations could be seen as an investment in finding solutions with children, but if teachers do not see change happening or feel success they will not be willing to invest the time required.
- Thought should be given as to how to communicate with parents and children about lagging skills and unsolved problems. Sometimes communication with parents of children with challenging behaviour can result in conflict or strained relationships between home and school. Focus on skill development may encourage positive, goal centred communication.
- Positive change should be celebrated so that successful progress is recognised, shared and available for others to learn from.

Conclusion

This study shows these teachers believe the CPS approach to be worth exploring further and that it supports positive strategies to address many of the concerns they have about challenging behaviour. Having time to implement the CPS

approach effectively is challenging for teachers. The time investment may be worth it in terms of strengthened teacher-student relationships, solved problems, and reduced challenging behaviour. Teachers sense of agency and self-determination may also be enhanced.

These teachers demonstrated a belief in the importance of the SDT concept of relatedness. A deeper understanding of the SDT needs of autonomy and competence as these relate to both the teacher and the student might help teachers consider their own motivation and also the ways that they attempt to motivate students.

The CPS approach signals a shift in focus from challenging behaviour as a pathology that requires adult intervention to “fix the problem”. If children are already motivated to do well and when they are not doing well it is because of lagging skills, then dealing with challenging behaviour becomes much more a listening exercise and team approach that includes the child as the primary agent of change. The possibility of seeing children develop short- and long-term skills becomes more enticing and potentially fulfilling for teachers than the need to manage and control classroom behaviour through the manipulation of reward and consequence systems.

A strong desire to make sense of the causes of challenging behaviour leads teachers to attribute causality to a variety of explanations. Sometimes these attributions are based on teacher opinion rather than hearing the child’s perspective. The need that teachers have to understand the cause of challenging behaviour could be met when they take the time to listen to the child’s answer to the simple question: *What’s up?*

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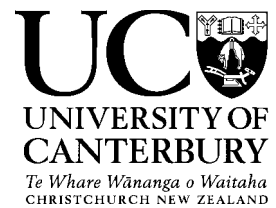
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Appendices

Appendix A – Board of Trustees consent letter



School of Educational Studies and Leadership
Telephone: +64 3 3889519
Email: pdw26@uclive.ac.nz
Date: [to be entered once approval from HEC has been received]
HEC Ref: [Enter when approval given for your study]

Dear Board of Trustees

Thank you for agreeing to my study leave for 2019.

As you are aware I am undertaking study at the University of Canterbury to complete my Master of Education degree. My research project is titled, Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging behaviour: Teacher perspectives. My primary supervisor is Dr Valerie Sotardi who can be contacted at Valerie.sotardi@canterbury.ac.nz. This research will be reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

I have attached the information sheet for teachers so that you can see the outline of the research and what teachers are being asked to participate in. At the conclusion of the research project I will be happy to present the findings at a Board of Trustees meeting.

I am asking Board of Trustees permission to conduct this research at XXXXXX School. Please sign and return the consent form below.

Kind regards

Paul Wilkinson

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging behaviour: Teacher perspectives

We, the Board of Trustees of XXXXXX School, agree to Paul Wilkinson undertaking this research project at XXXXXX School.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

Appendix B – Ethics approval confirmation



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca Robinson
Telephone: +64 03 369 4588, Extn 94588
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2019/18/ERHEC

11 April 2019

Paul Wilkinson
School of Educational Studies and Leadership
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Paul

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal “Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Approach to Challenging Behaviour: Teacher Perspectives” has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your emails of 1st and 11th April 2019.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

PP

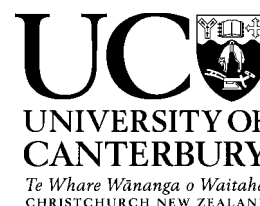
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'R. Robinson'.

Dr Patrick Shepherd
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

Please note that ethical approval relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research.

F E S

Appendix C – Information for participants



School of Educational Studies and Leadership

Telephone: +64 3 3889519

Email: pdw26@uc.ac.nz,

Date: [To be entered once HEC approval has been given]

HEC Ref: [Enter when approval given for your study]

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging behaviour: Teacher perspectives

Information Sheet for Teacher Participants

During 2019 I will be conducting research into teacher perspectives of managing children's challenging behaviour. I am interested in the behaviours teachers find challenging, the strategies they currently use to help manage those behaviours and what their opinions are on using a Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach to managing difficult behaviours.

You have been approached to take part in this study because you are a teacher at XXXXXX School and have verbally indicated your willingness to be part of the study.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement in this project will be meeting with me at least four times between now and the end of Term 3 2019. Meetings will take place at XXXXXX School at times agreed with you. My suggestion is that they could take place during CRT release.

1. The first interview will be a 1:1 semi-structured interview (see attached).
2. The second meeting will be a group workshop session with other teachers. This session will be presented by me and will introduce the CPS approach.
3. The third session, presented by me, will be a group coaching session about using an assessment tool called The Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP) (Copy attached). This tool focuses on identifying the triggers for children's challenging behaviour.
4. The final session would be a focus group session with other teacher participants asking you to reflect on your use of CPS and comment on how you found using this approach and any challenges it presented (see attached).

Each of these sessions would last for a maximum of one hour. The second and third sessions will be open to all XXXXXX School teaching staff to attend if they wish to. The final focus group session will only be with the teachers who have consented to be part of the study.

Between the workshop session and the final focus group session I will be available to meet with you and answer questions you may have about the CPS approach. If you would like me to coach you or observe you using the CPS approach or the ALSUP assessment tool and give you feedback on your use of these, I will be happy to do so.

I have no specific qualifications in the teaching or application of the CPS approach. I am participating in this research very much as a participant observer.

Meeting 1 and the final focus group meeting will be audio recorded. These will be transcribed either by me or by a professional transcriber who will have signed a confidentiality agreement (available on request). Data will include my notes and reflections of any meetings, transcripts of interviews and focus groups, and other data that you might choose to share with me, for example, you may choose to share with me reflections from your Interlead Appraisal Connector journal.

There are some risks associated with participation in this project. These are i) potential identification of participants through their comments by other participants or from research staff, ii) social risks of others making judgment about you as a person or as a teacher and iii) regret about comments made in any of the sessions. These risks will be managed by using pseudonyms or identifiers such as Teacher 1 or Teacher 2. Participants in focus group sessions will be reminded about confidentiality at the start of each session. Data will be kept in a password protected electronic form and any backups will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Raw data will be kept securely and destroyed after five years. My supervisors and I will be the only people with access to the raw data. It is also recognized that talking about challenging behaviour may bring up feelings of stress or anxiety. During interviews or focus groups you may choose to withdraw from the conversations at any time. School well-being supports including support from senior staff or counseling through EAP Services are available to you if required. The purpose of this research is to support staff and learn from your experiences not to judge you in any way. My role as Deputy Principal could be seen as representing an imbalance of power. The research relationship and anything you share as part of this research will only be used in the ways described in this information sheet and will not impact on your employment, promotion or career prospects in any way.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. You may ask for your raw data to be returned to you or destroyed at any point. If you withdraw, I will remove information relating to you. However, once analysis of raw data starts on 1 July 2019, it will become increasingly difficult to remove the influence of your data on the results.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this project. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UCLibrary.

Please indicate to the researcher on the consent form if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of results of the project.

The project is being carried out as partial fulfillment of the Master of Education degree through the University of Canterbury by Paul Wilkinson under the supervision of Dr Valerie Sotardi and Dr Cara Swit who can be contacted at valerie.sotardi@canterbury.ac.nz or cara.swit@canterbury.ac.nz They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return to me (I will be in school on Tuesday's or you can leave it in my pigeon hole).

Kind regards

Paul Wilkinson

School of Educational Studies and Leadership
Telephone: +64 3 3889519
Email: pdw26@uc.ac.nz,

**Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging
behaviour: Teacher perspectives
Consent Form for Teacher Participants**

Include a statement regarding each of the following:

- ☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.
- ☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.
- ☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.
- ☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.
- ☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher Paul Wilkinson paul@XXXXXX.school.nz or supervisor Valerie Sotardi Valerie.sotardi@canterbury.ac.nz for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)
- ☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.
- ☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____

Email address (for report of findings, if applicable): _____

Please hand this consent form back to me at school or place it in my pigeon hole in the school office.

Paul Wilkinson

Appendix D – Questions for 1:1 semi-structured interviews

1. In your classroom, do you typically face any challenging behaviours by students? See definition for examples of challenging behaviour.
2. If you do face challenging behaviours, apart from the examples in the previous question what other types of behaviour do you find challenging?
3. How do you feel when you are dealing with challenging behaviour?
4. Thinking about a recent interaction with a child where you found the behaviour challenging. Describe the situation and your response. What was the outcome?
5. Do you use any specific strategies to manage challenging behaviour? If yes please describe.
6. Have you done any professional reading or professional development to help you understand and manage children with challenging behaviour? If yes please describe.
7. Do you use any specific teaching programmes or strategies to teach appropriate behaviours? If yes please describe.
8. Do you use any strategies to identify underlying problems for children with challenging behaviour? If yes please describe.
9. Who can you ask for support from when dealing with challenging behaviour?
10. Are there any other thoughts you have about children with challenging behaviour that we haven't discussed?
11. When thinking about everything we have talked about today about children with challenging behaviour, what is the one thing that you find most difficult or challenging?

Appendix E – Questions for focus group sessions

Please describe your experience of trialling the CPS approach in your classroom.

1. What were some of the challenges you discovered in using the CPS approach?
2. Please describe any successes you had using the CPS approach.
3. Did CPS contribute to your confidence in responding to challenging behaviours? Why/why not?
4. What other supports would help you more effectively manage difficult behaviour?
5. Would you continue to try using a CPS approach with children?
Please explain.

Appendix F – Booklet for participants

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Approach to Challenging Behaviour



Handout prepared for Rāwhiti School teacher participants in 2019 research study; Collaborative and Proactive Solutions Approach to Challenging Behaviour: Teacher Perspectives

Paul Wilkinson
EDEM691: Masters Research Proposal
University of Canterbury
Student ID: 18233979
pdw26@uclive.ac.nz



BILL OF RIGHTS FOR BEHAVIORALLY CHALLENGING KIDS



Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

If we don't start doing right by kids with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, we're going to keep losing them at an astounding rate. Doing the right thing isn't an option...it's an imperative. There are lives in the balance, and we all need to do everything we can to make sure those lives aren't lost.

BEHAVIORALLY CHALLENGING KIDS HAVE THE RIGHT:

1. To have their behavioral challenges understood as a form of developmental delay in the domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem-solving.
2. To have people -- parents, teachers, mental health clinicians, doctors, coaches...everyone -- understand that challenging behavior is no less a form of developmental delay than delays in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and is deserving of the same compassion and approach as are applied to these other cognitive delays.
3. Not to be misunderstood as bratty, spoiled, manipulative, attention-seeking, coercive, limit-testing, controlling, or unmotivated.
4. To have adults understand that challenging behavior occurs in response to specific unsolved problems and that these unsolved problems are usually highly predictable and can therefore be solved proactively.
5. To have adults understand that the primary goal of intervention is to collaboratively solve these problems in a way that is realistic and mutually satisfactory so that they don't precipitate challenging behavior any more.
6. To have adults (and peers) understand that time-outs, detentions, suspensions, expulsion, and isolation do not solve problems or "build character" but rather often make things worse.
7. To have adults take a genuine interest in their concerns or perspectives, and to have those concerns and perspectives viewed as legitimate, important, and worth listening to and clarifying.
8. To have adults in their lives who do not resort to physical intervention and are knowledgeable about and proficient in other means of solving problems.
9. To have adults who understand that solving problems collaboratively -- rather than insisting on blind adherence to authority -- is what prepares kids for the demands they will face in the real world.
10. To have adults understand that blind obedience to authority is dangerous, and that life in the real world requires expressing one's concerns, listening to the concerns of others, and working toward mutually satisfactory solutions.

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F.A.Q.



Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
The Next Generation of Solving Problems Collaboratively

A more compassionate, productive, effective, approach to understanding and helping behaviorally challenged kids.

Dr. Ross Greene is the originator of the research-based approach-- now called Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS)-- to understanding and helping behaviorally challenging kids, as described in his books *The Explosive Child* and *Lost at School*. The CPS model has been implemented in countless families, schools, inpatient psychiatry units, therapeutic group homes, and residential and juvenile detention facilities. The approach sets forth two major tenets. First, challenging behavior in kids is best understood as the result of lagging cognitive skills (in the general domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving) rather than as the result of passive, permissive, inconsistent, noncontingent parenting. And second, the best way to reduce challenging episodes is by working together with the child - collaborating - to solve the problems setting them in motion in the first place (rather than by imposing adult will and intensive use of reward and punishment procedures). Here are some of the important questions answered by the model:

QUESTION: Why are challenging kids challenging?

ANSWER: Because they're lacking the skills not to be challenging. If they had the skills, they wouldn't be challenging. That's because -and this is perhaps the key theme of the model - *Kids do well if they can*. And because (here's another key theme) *Doing well is preferable to not doing well*. This, of course, is a dramatic departure from the view of challenging kids as attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, limit-testing, and poorly motivated. It's a completely different set of lenses, supported by research in the neurosciences over the past 30-40 years, and it has dramatic implications for how caregivers go about helping such kids.

QUESTION: When are challenging kids challenging?

ANSWER: When the demands or expectations being placed upon them exceed the skills that they have to respond adaptively. Of course, that's when we all respond maladaptively; when we're lacking the skills to respond adaptively. Thus, an important goal for helpers is to identify the skills a challenging kid is lacking. An even more important goal is to identify the specific expectations a kid is having difficulty meeting, referred to as *unsolved problems*...and to help kids solve those problems. Because unsolved problems tend to be highly predictable, the problem-solving should be proactive most of the time. Identifying lagging skills and unsolved problems is accomplished through use of an instrument called the *Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP)*. You can find the ALSUP in The Paperwork section of the website of *Lives in the Balance*, the nonprofit Dr. Greene founded to help disseminate his approach (livesinthebalance.org).

QUESTION: What behaviors do challenging kids exhibit when they don't have the skills to respond adaptively to certain demands?

ANSWER: Challenging kids communicate that they're struggling to meet demands and expectations in some fairly common ways: whining, pouting, sulking, withdrawing, crying, screaming, swearing, hitting, spitting, kicking, throwing, lying, stealing, and so forth. But what a kid *does* when he's having trouble meeting demands and expectations isn't the most important part (though it may feel that way). *Why* and *when* he's doing these things are much more important.

QUESTION: What should we be doing differently to help these kids better than we're helping them now?

ANSWER: If challenging behavior is set in motion by lagging skills and not lagging motivation, then it's easy to understand why rewarding and punishing a kid may not make things better. Since challenging behavior occurs in response to highly predictable unsolved problems, then the goal is to solve those problems. But if we solve them unilaterally, through imposition of adult will (referred to in the model as "Plan A"), then we'll only increase the likelihood of challenging episodes and we won't solve any problems durably. Better to solve those problems collaboratively ("Plan B") so the kid is a fully invested participant; solutions are more durable, and (over time) the kid -- and often the adults as well -- learn the skills they were lacking all along. *Plan B* is comprised of three basic ingredients. The first ingredient - called the *Empathy* step - involves gathering information from the child so as to achieve the clearest understanding of his or her concern or perspective on a given unsolved problem. The second ingredient (called the *Define Adult Concerns* step) involves entering into consideration the adult concern or perspective on the same unsolved problem. The third ingredient (called the *Invitation* step) involves having the adult and kid brainstorm solutions so as to arrive at a plan of action that is both realistic and mutually satisfactory...in other words, a solution that addresses the concerns of both parties and that both parties can actually perform.

QUESTION: Where can I learn more about this model?

ANSWER: The *Lives in the Balance* website is a very good place to start. It has a ton of free resources to help you learn about and apply Dr. Greene's approach, including streaming video, audio programming, commentary, support, and lots more.

QUESTION: Isn't this the same model as what was previously known as Collaborative Problem Solving?

ANSWER: Dr. Greene is the originator of the Collaborative Problem Solving approach, and for many years referred to his model by that name in his research papers, scholarly articles, books, and workshops. He now calls his model *Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS)*. Be careful! There are others using the name Collaborative Problem Solving out there, but they had nothing to do with the origination or development of Dr. Greene's model and are not associated with Dr. Greene or *Lives in the Balance* in any way!

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Changing the conversation about behaviorally challenging kids

REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

"KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN"
~ROSS GREENE



"SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD"
~Dr. Stuart Shanker

When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be "STRESS DETECTIVES"...finding and removing barriers.

- * FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
- * FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
- * FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM

@kufens62

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions



THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

ALSUP Guide

- The *Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems* (ALSUP) is best used as a *discussion guide* rather than as a free-standing checklist or rating scale.
- Meetings should be focused almost totally on identifying lagging skills and unsolved problems. It is not the goal of the meeting to try to explain *why* a child has a particular lagging skill or unsolved problem, so hypotheses and theories about *cause* are to be avoided. It is also counterproductive to have participants go into great detail about the *behaviors* that a child exhibits in response to a given unsolved problem so story telling is to be avoided as well.
- It's best to discuss each lagging skill (rather than "cherry-picking"), starting at the top
- If a lagging skill is endorsed, don't continue moving down the list of lagging skills...move *over* to identify the unsolved problems associated with the lagging skill
- An unsolved problem is an *expectation a child is having difficulty meeting in association with a particular lagging skill*
- To identify unsolved problems, begin with the stem, "Can you give some examples of expectations (Theresa) is having difficulty meeting when you think of her having (then restate the endorsed lagging skill. For example, "Can you give some examples of expectations Theresa is having difficulty meeting when you think of her having difficulty making transitions?"
- Identify as many unsolved problems as possible for each endorsed lagging skill... don't move on after identifying only one unsolved problem has been identified.
- Many lagging skills may contribute to the same unsolved problem...don't spend valuable meeting time trying to be precise about which lagging skill best accounts for a given unsolved problem.
- Don't write the same unsolved problem in more than once, even if a later lagging skills reminds you of the same unsolved problem.
- There are some important guidelines for writing unsolved problems:
 - ⇒ **They usually begin with the word *Difficulty***, and the word *Difficulty* is usually followed by a verb, for example:
 - Difficulty *getting started* on the double-digit division problems in math
 - Difficulty *completing* the map of Europe in geography
 - Difficulty *participating* in the discussions in morning meeting
 - Difficulty *moving* from choice time to math
 - Difficulty *ending* computer time to come to circle time
 - Difficulty *coming* into school in the morning
 - Difficulty *going* to the nurse for your medication before lunch

- Difficulty *walking* in the hallway between classes
 - Difficulty *keeping* hands to self in the lunch line
 - Difficulty *lining up* for the bus at the end of the school day
 - Difficulty *sitting* next to Trevor during circle time
 - Difficulty *taking turns* during class discussions in Social Studies
 - Difficulty *raising* hand during class discussions in Science
 - Difficulty *remaining* quiet when a classmate is sharing his or her ideas in English
 - Difficulty *waiting* for his turn during the four-square game at recess
 - Difficulty *putting* away the Legos after choice time
 - Difficulty *retrieving* his Geography notebook from his locker before Geography class
 - Difficulty *arriving* at school on time at 8:30 am
- ⇒ **They should contain no reference to the child's *challenging* behaviors**, though reference to *expected* behaviors is fine (so you wouldn't write *Screams and swears when having difficulty completing the word problems on the math homework*...instead write *Difficulty completing the word problems on the math homework*)
- ⇒ **They should contain no adult theories** (so you wouldn't write *Difficulty writing the definitions to the spelling words in English...because his parents were recently divorced*)
- ⇒ **They should be split, not clumped** (so you wouldn't write *Difficulty raising hand* but rather *Difficulty raising hand during social studies discussions*)
- ⇒ **They should be specific**...there are two strategies to help:
- Include details related to who, what, where, and when
 - Ask *What expectation is the child/student having difficulty meeting?*



CHILD'S NAME _____ DATE _____

INSTRUCTIONS: The ALSUP is intended for use as a discussion guide rather than as a freestanding check-list or rating scale. It should be used to identify specific lagging skills and unsolved problems that pertain to a particular child or adolescent.

If a lagging skill applies, check it off and then (before moving on to the next lagging skill) identify the specific expectations the child is having difficulty meeting in association with that lagging skill (unsolved problems). A non-exhaustive list of sample unsolved problems is shown at the bottom of the page.

LAGGING SKILLS	UNSOLVED PROBLEMS
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty doing things in a logical sequence or prescribed order	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks	
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor sense of time	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty maintaining focus	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty managing emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capacity for problem-solving or heighten frustration	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeing "grays"/concrete, literal, black & white, thinking	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty deviating from rules, routine	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me," "You always blame me," "It's not fair," "I'm stupid")	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/lacking other basic social skills	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeking attention in appropriate ways	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how his/her behavior is affecting others	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person's perspective or point of view	
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how s/he is coming across or being perceived by others	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory/motor difficulties	

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS GUIDE:

Unsolved problems are the specific expectations a child is having difficulty meeting. Unsolved problems should be free of maladaptive behavior; free of adult theories and explanations; "split" (not "clumped"); and specific.

HOME EXAMPLES

- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning in time to get to school
- Difficulty getting started on or completing homework (specify assignment)
- Difficulty ending the video game to get ready for bed at night
- Difficulty coming indoors for dinner when playing outside
- Difficulty agreeing with brother about what TV show to watch after school
- Difficulty with the feelings of searais in socks
- Difficulty brushing teeth before bedtime

SCHOOL EXAMPLES

- Difficulty moving from choice time to math
- Difficulty sitting next to Kyle during circle time
- Difficulty raising hand during social studies discussions
- Difficulty getting started on project on tectonic plates in geography
- Difficulty standing in line for lunch

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Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP) Check List



Instructions:

Place a check ✓ for each item in the consistency rating scale. The scale is from 1: not at all consistent to 5: very consistent. Provide comments or note what worked well in the comments column.

Steps in Implementing an ALSUP Meeting						Comments/What worked well
Conduct of the Meeting	Not at all Consistent		Very Consistent			
	1	2	3	4	5	
1) Directs the meeting in a manner that limits theorizing, storytelling or discussion about behavior						
Identification of lagging skills						
2) Starts with the first lagging skill and moves down the list without "cherry-picking"						
3) Provides comprehensible descriptions of lagging skills when clarification is required						
4) Doesn't get caught up in discussions around which lagging skills best accounts for a given unsolved problem						
5) After endorsing a lagging skill, immediately identifies the associated unsolved problems (prior to moving on to the next lagging skill)						
Identification of unsolved problems associated with each lagging skill						
6) Begins with the stem, "What expectations is (name of child) having difficulty meeting that spring to mind when you think of (restates endorsed lagging skill)"						
7) Identifies as many unsolved problems as possible for each endorsed lagging skill (doesn't move on after identifying only one unsolved problem)						
8) Doesn't write the same unsolved problem more than once, even if a later lagging skill causes participants to think of the same unsolved problem						
Writing unsolved problems						
9) Begins most problems with the with the word "Difficulty..."						
10) Includes no reference to the child's challenging behaviors (reference to expected behaviors is fine)						
11) Includes no adult theories						
12) Splits problems rather than clumping them						
13) Provides specific details related to who, what, where, and when of the problems and is explicit about the expectations the child is having difficulty meeting						
14) Wording is kid friendly						

PLAN B CHEAT SHEET



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THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

① EMPATHY STEP | INGREDIENT/GOAL

Gather information about and achieve a clear understanding of the kid's concern or perspective on the unsolved problem you're discussing.

WORDS | Initial Inquiry (neutral observation)

"I've noticed that...(insert unsolved problem)... what's up?"

DRILLING FOR INFORMATION

Usually involves reflective listening and clarifying questions, gathering information related to the who, what, where, and when of the unsolved problem, and asking the kids what they're thinking in the midst of the unsolved problems and why the problem occurs under some conditions and not others.

MORE HELP

If the kid doesn't talk or says "I don't know", try to figure out why:

- Maybe the unsolved problem wasn't free of challenging behavior, wasn't specific, wasn't free of adult theories, or was "clumped" (instead of split)
- Maybe you're using Emergency Plan B (instead of Proactive Plan B)
- Maybe you're using Plan A
- Maybe he really doesn't know
- Maybe he needs the problem broken down into its component parts
- Maybe he needs time to think

WHAT YOU'RE THINKING

"What don't I yet understand about the kid's concern or perspective? What doesn't make sense to me yet? What do I need to ask to understand it better?"

DON'T

- Skip the Empathy step
- Assume you already know what the kid's concern is and treat the Empathy step as if it is a formality
- Rush through the Empathy step
- Leave the empathy step before you completely understand the kid's concern or perception
- Talk about solutions yet

② DEFINE ADULT CONCERNS STEP | INGREDIENT/GOAL

Enter the concern of the second party (often the adult) into consideration.

WORDS | Initial Inquiry (neutral observation)

"The thing is (insert adult concern)..." or "My concern is (insert adult concern)..."

MORE HELP

Most adult concerns fall into one of two categories:

- How the problem is affecting the kid
- How the problem is affecting others

WHAT YOU'RE THINKING

"Have I been clear about my concern? Does the child understand what I have said?"

DON'T

- Start talking about solutions yet
- Sermonize, judge, lecture, use sarcasm

③ INVITATION STEP | INGREDIENT/GOAL

Generate solutions that are realistic (meaning both parties can do what they are agreeing to) and mutually satisfactory (meaning the solution truly addresses the concerns of both parties)

WORDS | Initial Inquiry (neutral observation)

Restate the concerns that were identified in the first two steps, usually beginning with "I wonder if there is a way..."

MORE HELP

- Stick as closely to the concerns that were identified in the first two steps
- While it's a good idea to give the kid the first opportunity to propose a solution, generating solutions is a team effort
- It's a good idea to consider the odds of a given solution actually working...if you think the odds are below 60-70 percent, consider what it is that's making you skeptical and talk about it
- This step always ends with agreement to return to Plan B if the first solution doesn't stand the test of time

WHAT YOU'RE THINKING

"Have I summarized both concerns accurately? Have we truly considered whether both parties can do what they've agreed to? Does the solution truly address the concerns of both parties? What's my estimate of the odds of this solution working?"

DON'T

- Rush through this step either
- Enter this step with preordained solutions
- Sign off on solutions that both parties can't actually perform
- Sign off on solutions that don't truly address the concerns of both parties

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The goal of the Empathy Step is to gather information from the child about his/her concern or perspective on the unsolved problem you're discussing (preferably proactively). For many adults, this is the most difficult part of Plan B, as they often find that they are unsure of what to ask next. So here's a brief summary of different strategies for "drilling" for information:

REFLECTIVE LISTENING AND CLARIFYING STATEMENTS

Reflective listening basically involves **mirroring what a child has said** and then encouraging him/her to provide additional information by saying one of the following:

- * "How so?"
- * "I don't quite understand"
- * "I'm confused"
- * "Can you say more about that?"
- * "What do you mean?"

Reflective listening is your "default" drilling strategy...If you aren't sure of which strategy to use or what to say next, use this strategy.

ASKING ABOUT THE WHO, WHAT, WHERE/WHEN OF THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM

EXAMPLES:

- * "Who was making fun of your clothes?"
- * "What's getting the way of completing the science project?"
- * "Where is Eddie bossing you around?"

ASKING ABOUT WHY THE PROBLEM OCCURS UNDER SOME CONDITIONS AND NOT OTHERS

EXAMPLE: "You seem to be doing really well in your work group in math...but not so well in your work group in social studies...what's getting in the way in social studies?"

ASKING THE CHILD WHAT S/HE'S THINKING IN THE MIDST OF THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM

Notice, this is different than asking the child what s/he is feeling, which doesn't usually provide much information about the child's concern or perspective on an unsolved problem.

EXAMPLE: "What were you thinking when Mrs. Thompson told the class to get to work on the science quiz?"

BREAKING THE PROBLEM DOWN INTO ITS COMPONENT PARTS

EXAMPLE: "So writing the answers to the questions on the science quiz is hard for you...but you're not sure why. Let's think about the different parts of answering questions on the science quiz. First, you have to understand what the question is asking. Is that part hard for you? Next, you need to think of the answer to the question. Is that part hard? Next, you have to remember the answer long enough to write it down. Are you having trouble with that part? Then you have to actually do the writing. Any trouble with that part?"

DISCREPANT OBSERVATION

This involves making an observation that differs from what the child is describing about a particular situation, and it's the riskiest (in terms of causing the child to stop talking) of all the drilling strategies.

EXAMPLE: "I know you're saying that you haven't been having any difficulty with Chad on the playground lately, but I recall a few times last week when you guys were having a big disagreement about the rules in the box-ball game. What do you think was going on with that?"

TABLING (AND ASKING FOR MORE CONCERNS)

This is where you're "shelving" some concerns the child has already expressed so as to permit consideration of other concerns.

EXAMPLE: "So if Timmy wasn't sitting too close to you, and Robbie wasn't making noises, and the floor wasn't dirty, and the buttons in your pants weren't bothering you...is there anything else that would make it difficult for you to participate in Morning Meeting?"

SUMMARIZING (AND ASKING FOR MORE CONCERNS)

This is where you're summarizing concerns you've already heard about and then asking if there are any other concerns that haven't yet been discussed. This is the recommended strategy to use before moving on to the Define Adult Concerns step.

EXAMPLE: "Let me make sure I understand all of this correctly. It's hard for you to do your social studies worksheet for homework because writing down the answers is still hard for you...and because sometimes you don't understand the question...and because Mrs. Langley hasn't yet covered the material on the worksheet. Is there anything else that's hard for you about completing the social studies worksheet for homework?"

Prepared with the assistance of Dr. Christopher Watson



PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN



Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

CHILD'S NAME _____ DATE _____

UNSOLVED PROBLEM #1	UNSOLVED PROBLEM #2	UNSOLVED PROBLEM #3
Adult taking the lead on Plan B:	Adult taking the lead on Plan B:	Adult taking the lead on Plan B:
Kid concerns identified: (Empathy step) DATE _____	Kid concerns identified: (Empathy step) DATE _____	Kid concerns identified: (Empathy step) DATE _____
Adult concerns identified: (Define the Problem step) DATE _____	Adult concerns identified: (Define the Problem step) DATE _____	Adult concerns identified: (Define the Problem step) DATE _____
Solution agreed upon: (Invitation step) DATE _____	Solution agreed upon: (Invitation step) DATE _____	Solution agreed upon: (Invitation step) DATE _____
Problem Solved? YES? _____ DATE _____ NO? _____ COMMENT: _____	Problem Solved? YES? _____ DATE _____ NO? _____ COMMENT: _____	Problem Solved? YES? _____ DATE _____ NO? _____ COMMENT: _____

RI V 060417

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Plan B Meeting Check List

Instructions:

Place a check ✓ for each item in the consistency rating scale. The scale is from 1: not at all consistent to 5: very consistent. Provide comments or note what worked well in the comments column.

Steps in Implementing a Plan B Meeting	Consistency Rating Scale					Comments/What worked well
Empathy Step	Not at all Consistent			Very Consistent		
	1	2	3	4	5	
1) The Empathy step begins with an introduction, which begins with the words "I've noticed that..." and ends with the words "What's up?" In between, an unsolved problem is inserted.						
2) The unsolved problem begins with the word "difficulty" and refers to the specific expectation the child is having difficulty meeting in kid-friendly language. The unsolved problem is split (rather than clumped) and contains no adult theories, no challenging behaviors, and is as specific as possible.						
3) Sufficient and appropriate use of probing or drilling strategies						
4) Ends when the child has no additional concerns. This is established by summarizing and asking for additional concerns. (Multiple summaries are likely.)						
5) Prioritize concerns.						
Define Adult Concerns Step						
6) The Defining Adult Concern step begins with the words "My concern is..." or "The thing is..."						
7) Explains how the unsolved problem is affecting the child and/or how the unsolved problem is affecting others.						
8) Avoids referring to the child's behavior.						
9) Is not merely a restatement of the expectation.						
10) Prioritize concerns.						
Invitation Step						
11) The Invitation step begins with the words "I wonder if there is a way?"						
12) Recap the concerns of both parties: "I wonder if there's a way for us to do something about (one party's concerns) and also do something about (other party's concerns)"						
13) Gives the child the first crack at the solution.						
14) Develops solutions as a team effort.						
15) Gauges solutions by the degree to which they are realistic (both parties can do what they are agreeing to) and mutually satisfactory (the solution truly addresses the concerns of both parties).						

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging behaviour:

Teacher perspectives

Questions for 1:1 semi-structured interviews

1. In your classroom, do you typically face any challenging behaviours by students? See definition above for examples of challenging behaviour.
2. If you do face challenging behaviours, apart from the examples in the previous question what other types of behaviour do you find challenging?
3. How do you feel when you are dealing with challenging behaviour?
4. Thinking about a recent interaction with a child where you found the behaviour challenging. Describe the situation and your response. What was the outcome?
5. Do you use any specific strategies to manage challenging behaviour? If yes please describe.
6. Have you done any professional reading or professional development to help you understand and manage children with challenging behaviour? If yes please describe.
7. Do you use any specific teaching programmes or strategies to teach appropriate behaviours? If yes please describe.
8. Do you use any strategies to identify underlying problems for children with challenging behaviour? If yes please describe.
9. Who can you ask for support from when dealing with challenging behaviour?
10. Are there any other thoughts you have about children with challenging behaviour that we haven't discussed?

11. When thinking about everything we have talked about today about children with challenging behaviour, what is the one thing that you find most difficult or challenging?

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging behaviour:

Teacher perspectives

Questions for focus group sessions

Please describe your experience of trialling the CPS approach in your classroom.

What were some of the challenges you discovered in using the CPS approach?

Please describe any successes you had using the CPS approach.

What other supports would help you more effectively manage difficult behaviour?

Would you continue to try using a CPS approach with children? Please explain.





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- (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Faber & Mazlish, 1995; Greene, 2018; Klem & Connell, 2004; Kohn, 1993, 1999; Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c)

Appendix G – Definition of challenging behaviour

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach to challenging behaviour:

Teacher perspectives

Challenging Behaviour – working definition

For the purpose of this research the definition of challenging behaviour is any behaviour that significantly affects a child's learning, risks their safety or the safety of others, or behaviour that gets in the way of positive relationships with other people.

Examples: Challenging behaviours may include violent or unsafe behaviours such as hitting, kicking, biting, running away, smashing furniture or equipment. It may include disruptive behaviours such as calling out in class, refusal to comply with reasonable instructions or swearing. Challenging behaviour may include unacceptable social behaviours such as stealing, inappropriate touching or inappropriate conversation. It may also include withdrawal behaviours such as social isolation, rocking, excessive shyness or inability to engage in classroom activities because of anxiety.